

騎士 & 魔法

Knight's & Magic 1

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1

輕小說



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Knight's & Magic



一名日本青年因車禍事故與世長辭。他的靈魂在異世界獲得重生，成了名為「艾爾摩斯命・埃切貝里亞」的美少年，而且依然帶著前世日本人的記憶。艾爾受到前世的嗜好影響，讓他在這裏也成了重度「機械宅」。他在轉世投胎的新世界與巨大人型兵器——幻晶騎士相遇，愛不可支的艾爾為了成為機器人的駕駛員，立刻展開了一連串的規劃。他不僅把這個世界的童年玩伴拖下水，還將在這個世界橫衝直撞。這一切都是為了滿足他的機械研究欲！

於小說投稿網站「成為小說家吧」大受歡迎的機器人奇幻故事終於付梓成冊。機械宅青年歷經轉世輪迴，駕駛起真正的機器人大展身手！



Knight's & Magic

1

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illustration 黒銀

ピッキングランス
エルは瞬きするほどの間に徹甲炎槍の配置を終えると、
直後に標的に向けて一斉に撃ち放った。



「俺はアーキッド。」

『キッド』な。

で、そっちが妹の」

「アデルトルート。」

『アデイ』って呼んで



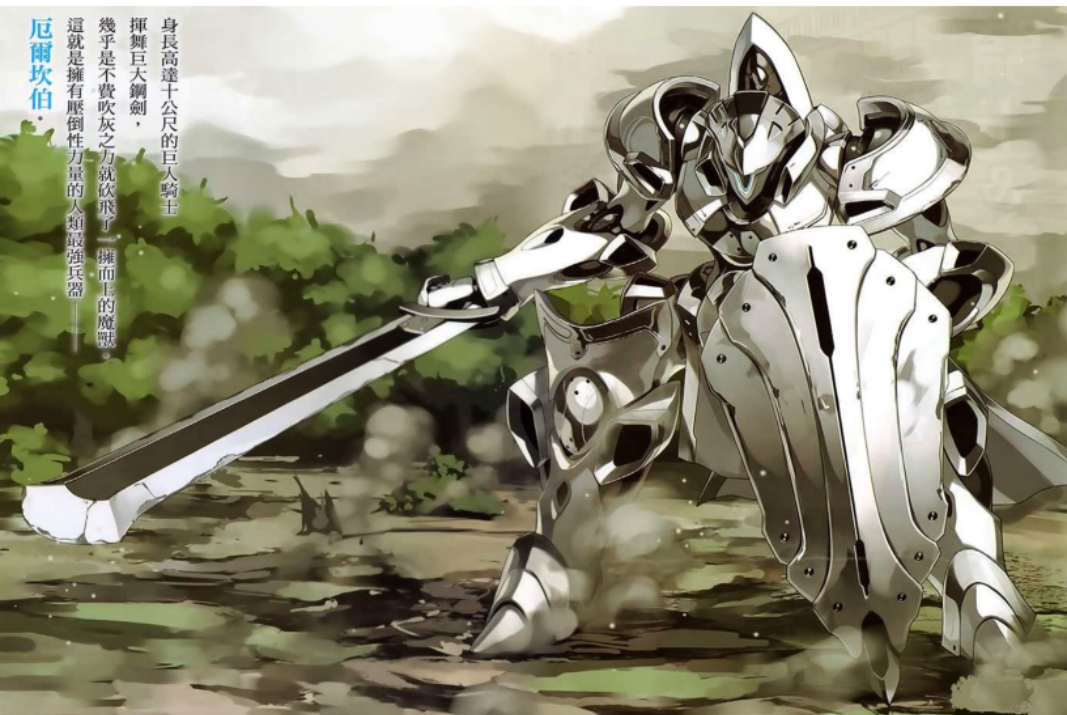
身長高達十公尺的巨人騎士

揮舞巨大鋼劍，

幾乎是不費吹灰之力就砍飛了一擁而上的魔獸。

這就是擁有壓倒性力量的人類最強兵器。

厄爾坎伯。





「怎麼
回事!？」

飛散在半空中。

騎士&魔法 1

Knight's & Magic

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Prologue

It was already evening when the glaring sun set on the horizon, its shadows expanding across the scenery. The roads absorbed a lot of heat during the day, but released it back into the air at this time. It was going to be another night too warm to sleep comfortably.

This was K City's K district, a place where the above scene was commonplace.

The city station was surrounded by skyscrapers, each accommodating a myriad of companies. 'K Softworks', a mid-sized software company, sat on the 4th floor.

In its cool air-conditioned office, several men stared silently at their computer screens. The atmosphere was tense. For a mid-sized company's employees, their daily workload was always heavy, but today's load was exceptionally heavy.

"We only have 3 days left to finish it..."

A man sitting at one end of the office mumbled with a hint of despair. He was currently battling with a time bomb ticking towards an explosion, also known as a deadline. Due to the downturn of the nation's economy, the anxious sales team had grudgingly accepted the contract, even though its demands were unreasonable. Even during the planning phase, the project managed by him had little room for error. Repeated failures made it even more perilous; the situation could only be described as 'hellish'. And there were even more pressing issues.

"Section Chief Nakai, Sato is down! He's not reacting even when we splash him with water!"

"Section Chief Nakai, we won't make it in time if we don't

finish the coding today.”

“...Nakai-san, Takeda’s desk has a resignation letter on it...”

“Ah—Shut up! How can we meet the deadline with things like this—!”

The man with his back against the corner, Section Chief Nakai, finally broke down. He hugged his head and rested it on his table.

There wasn’t any time to waste, but he knew the task was impossible with how short on manpower they were... The deadline was looming, but there weren’t any obvious solutions, pushing his mental state to the breaking point.

“Nakai-san.”

“What is it now!?”

He raised his head after hearing someone address him, and as he opened his eyes a man with a gentle smile appeared.

“I have finished the case on my side, and I am ready to assist you.”

“Oh... Kurata... Are you fine with joining in?”

The pain on Nakai’s face was swept away, like a man who saw a ray of light in the midst of despair.

“I browsed through the specification manual and I’ve gotten the gist of the situation. Can you let me handle the progress management?”

“Of...Of course, I might as well give you my password, you can flip through the management folders too. Take care of all that please.”

“Eh, Nakai-san, I can’t manage all that... Erm, the coding parts are holding back the progress, let me settle this...”

The man speaking with Nakai, Kurata Tsubasa, sat down on the chair prepared by Nakai and started working immediately. He typed in codes in the editor, all the while reading the progress reports and the specification manual. As he did this he gave instructions to his colleagues around him.

“Ensure the testing machine is operational, test analyst, take this opportunity to rest. Erm, we will begin intensive testing after 12. For coding... Tatsu-san, can you complete 2 modules? Yes, I will do the other 10. Kiba, there are some weird parts in the specification manual, please fix them and resume testing.”

He was 28 years old, considered part of the younger generation within the workplace, but no one questioned his instructions. This was due to his track record in the company. Since he started working there, he was commonly an inspiration to his half-dead coworkers. Since he was on the case, it meant the job's end was in sight. Humans were realistic creatures, if they could see the ending, they could endure it no matter how tough it was.

“Alright, that should do it. I will start coding.”

“Hey, Kurata, will you be fine? Ten modules... That is no laughing matter.”

“Nakai-san, did you forget? My actual profession is a programmer.”

With his eyes half closed a fearless smile appeared on Kurata's gentle face. He put his fingers on the keyboard, and all 10 fingers started dancing at a frightening speed. He typed in code in several editors that were open on his screen, processing the data like a torrent. The mature man sitting opposite him, Tatsu, threw himself into his work when he heard the amazing typing sound.

“As expected of the ‘Last Line of Defense’ for the company, he has been handling all the troubling cases so far... I have to keep up.”

Everyone put their hearts into their work, and the sluggish battle improved dramatically.



The radio broadcast announced the time. The clock on the wall indicated it was 5:15 PM—time to get off work. According to company policy, working hours had ended, but Kurata simply stretched his back and rotated his tired shoulders.

He had been salvaging this case for three days. Today was the dreaded deadline, but the atmosphere was no longer as desperate as it was three days prior. The case was thought to be hopeless by everyone before, yet it was rescued under his expert hands.

Thanks to him finishing the program in one day, and the other team members working without rest, they managed to barely finish the product before the deadline. Although Kurata finished so much work in such a short amount of time, he managed each part perfectly, a miraculous talent beyond comprehension. Sadly, his skill was outstanding because he was always handed the troubling cases.

After the long series of battles, empty cans of coffee and energy drinks were piled up like gravestones on his desk. Looking at his sides, he could see the warriors (test analysts) smiling peacefully, collapsed on beds made out of chairs. Kurata had decreased his sleeping hours to the bare minimum, and he too felt that it was time to rest up.

“Alright, the client acknowledged the receipt of the product! We are done! Great news everyone, now we can rest easy!”

Kurata woke from his half asleep state and saw the elated Nakai in a victory pose. He thought about going home to rest, but

decided to nap for a while. By the time he woke up to go home, it was already time for the last train.

Several days after the death march, the end of the month was here. Speaking of end of the month, people were thinking of—indeed, the gospel of all working adults, payday.

Kurata turned off the computer and prepared to leave in a hurry. He was not alone, his colleagues also started to leave. Following popular trends, companies had cut down the working hours of office workers. The companies had the obligation to let their staff leave on time, especially on payday. Although it was an obligation, this rule were often overlooked when things got hectic. But compared to the hellish time they had just a few days before, it was much more relaxed now.

Today was a happy Friday. Some were rushing to meet their family, others were gathering with their friends, getting ready to splurge. There were others who just wanted to rest at home. Everybody was different, but for those getting their salaries, this day they looked forward to coinciding with the weekend made it a happy occasion.

Kurata was the same too. Several colleagues who went through the death march gathered at his side.

“Kurata, want to get a drink? You were a big help, the first one is on me.”

Nakai made a drinking gesture, with other people that worked on the project such as Tatsu and Kiba standing behind him. Kurata was about to join them, but he remembered his planned schedule and hesitated.

“Ah—Sorry Nakai-san, I have an engagement, maybe next time.”

“Nakai-san, today is the day, Kurata’s hobby...”

“Oh... That. Can’t be helped, don’t skip out next time.”

“Okay.”

Kurata watched the group leave, and headed toward his destination as well. The young, talented man known as the ‘Last Line of Defense’, depended on by everyone in the company, had a unique hobby well known within the company.

On this weekend, the streets were humid in the summer heat, crowded with office workers getting off work. The way to the station was jammed with people. After walking some distance away, the traffic got smoother.

“Over. Time. Pay! Get!”

A man—Kurata, yelled in front of the ATM. If he had done that in front of a manned counter, he would probably be reported to the police for acting suspiciously.

His emotion stemmed from the cold figures displayed on the ATM screen. The cases he handled were usually stressful and dangerous, but his efforts paid off in the form of overtime pay, so his savings increased steadily.

Without smiling, Kurata withdrew some cash and hurried toward his destination. His movements had no hesitation, a sign that he had gone through this route many times. A building appeared in front of him shortly. That was a major electronics shopping center near the train station. On the third floor was a huge toy department—his goal.



A few hours later, a man left the toy department while the

store's closing music played.

“As expected of the month-end sale. This is great.”

The man carried two full bags in each hand, both double-layered to prevent tearing. His backpack was also bulging in a strange shape. His bags were filled with plastic models. He was a ‘model otaku’¹.

“Surfacer, paint, tools have been resupplied...the modeling festival shall begin...”

For his hectic lifestyle, the shopping spree on payday and the modeling festival was his biggest joy. It might have been the dull and normal lifestyle taking a toll on him, but the number of models he purchased increased every year. It finally became a monthly habit, and he was now completely addicted.

He wore his silly smile, walking home with his bags happily. The apartment he stayed in was some distance away from the company, the station sat between his residence and the company. He needed to make a detour whenever he visited the electronics shopping center, but it wasn't a big deal since he got what he was after. Kurata made his way past the quiet residential zone humming joyfully. The traffic was very light at this hour.

The sound of an engine broke the silence, and the oncoming headlights restricted his vision. With the lights from the distance blinding him, he hurried to the side of the road. The road was relatively wide, but it would be bad if one of his bags broke. Kurata frowned at the usage of high beams in the residential area, but he paid it no mind and continued walking.

The dazzling headlights fatally slowed his reaction. The car came straight at him with no sign of stopping. By the time he realized it, it was too late for him to avoid it.

“Hey, wait...”

The roar of the engine reverberated in his ears, and his vision was drowned out by the lights. He felt a chill down his back.

He collided with the car while hugging his bags. At the moment of impact, he heard his body make a frightening sound. As his body flew through the air, before he lost consciousness because of the pain, all sorts of emotions flashed through his mind. But he did not see his life flash before his eyes, or curse his luck in being a victim in this accident.

(Ah, I can't make the models I just bought and the series of models that will be released next month, such a shame...!)

In his mind was the passion he had for the models that he wouldn't be able to assemble anymore.



“—This just in.

Around 10 PM tonight, a man collided with a car in K City S district. The victim was an office worker residing in the area, Kurata Tsubasa (28). An ambulance was dispatched after a resident made a report, but they failed to resuscitate the victim. According to the police investigation, the suspect was driving under the influence—”

School Entry Arc

Chapter 1: Alternate world

A place he did not belong to, a different world.

This world had no name, the people had not completely explored it. They thought the continents they lived upon encompassed their whole world, and one such continent in this world was Zetterlund.

The Zetterlund Continent was split into an eastern and western region by the Aubigne Mountain Range. Divided by the mountain range, each region contained its own unique environment. The west was ruled by several countries controlled by humans, known collectively as the Western Union. To the east was the Bocuse sea of trees ruled by powerful Demonic creatures—the nest of Demonic Beasts.

However, the eastern region of Zetterlund was not totally devoid of all humans. There existed a solitary human nation, known as the kingdom of Fremmevira. Because this country was on the border of the sea of trees, it was also the first line of defense in the war against the demon beasts. To counter the roaming demon beasts the nation raised an army of knights and had maintained it to this day. They were prideful in their role as the shield of humanity and the Western Union and became known as the ‘Nation of Knights’.

In the year C.E. 1268 the story with this continent as its

background began.

At the base of Mount Aubigne, which reached up to the clouds, was the Capital of Fremmevira, Känkänen. If you traveled east for half a day on carriage, you would then reach a large town. This town was unique because more than half of its space was taken up by a single facility. It was a fortified building made with bricks and stones, yet it didn't feel intimidating and was not meant for military use. This building was an educational institute for children known as the 'Laihiala Pilot Academy'.

Knights defended the people against Demon beast attacks. As part of the glorious nation of knights, they were popular in Fremmevira, and it was a highly respected occupation. As a country prone to attacks due to its geographic location, they needed the support of a large army. Training knights was then made a priority for the nation, leading to the expansion of the educational organization for knights, the Laihiala Pilot Academy.

A low thud reverberated within the building crafted of stone masonry.

This place had wide flooring of stone, surrounded by stone walls and seats. This oval-shaped training ground was situated in a corner of the academy.

In the center of the grounds were two knights facing off with their swords. They were both heavily armored, one with a sword and shield, the other wielding a two-handed sword. The training ground was used for mock battles. The two knights were going through all sorts of drills, the swords they were using were blunted to avoid injury.

The two knights took the exercises seriously even though they were only practicing. They pointed the swords at each other, carefully gauging the distance of the opponent. A gust of wind blew sand into the air. The breathtaking stare-down ended, and both of them launched their attacks simultaneously, closing the gap between them in an instant. They moved into combat range so nimbly that it was unbelievable to think that they were in full battle armor.

But there was something off about the scene, the ground was

shaking with each step of the fighters, emitting low and heavy thuds into the air. Normal humans shouldn't be able make such heavy sounds with their footsteps even if they were fully armored.

The answer lay with their surroundings.

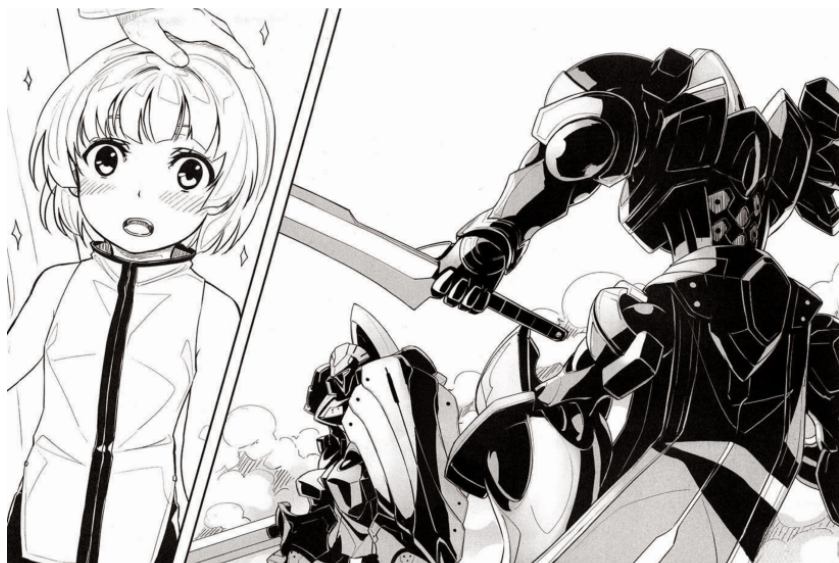
There were people in the audience seats watching the knights' duel, but their figures were much smaller than the knights. No, the opposite was true; it was the knights that were too big. If the size of the knights and the size of the audience were compared side by side, the knights would be at least 6 times larger. It was only natural for them to be heavy, and it was not an exaggeration to call them giants.

These giant knights were not human. They were actually Silhouette Knights, around 10 meters in height with metallic frames known as 'Inner Skeletons' and 'crystal tissues' acting as the muscles. Fueled by mana, it was a hybrid robot-spawned magic and -machinery, a giant knight. They were weapons made to fight against the magic beasts, the strongest fighting unit known to mankind.

A short distance away from the battling Silhouette Knights, several figures were watching the fight, one of them had an exceptionally sharp gaze.

He was one of the battle instructors. In other words, his duty was to instruct the pilots handling the battling Silhouette Knights in order to train them to protect the citizens from the demon beasts. He took in every single move of the battling trainees, giving off a serious air.

"They're... Robots..."



A cute voice came from behind. The man turned and saw a beautiful lady walking towards him with a child in her arms. The lady had smooth, flowing silver hair with a hint of purple that reached to her waist. Her hair swayed in the wind as she walked, leaving a bright silver trail behind her. She had gentle blue eyes, pale white skin and looked very young, between the age of 15 to 20. Despite her young age, she was already married and had a child.

The demonic instructor, whose face was feared by all, showed a rare smile. People who knew him might have been shocked, but it would not be surprising if you were in the warm presence of the

lady.

“Tina, what brings you here? It’s really rare to see you visit the academy.”

“I just wanted to let Eru see his father’s workplace, so I made a detour from our usual stroll.”

“I see. Eru, what do you think about Dad’s job?”

The man asked the child held by his wife but was completely ignored. The child kept waving his short limbs about, staring intently at the Silhouette Knights sparring on the training ground.

“Eh, he doesn’t seem to be listening...”

The man smiled as he patted his 3-year-old son’s head. The son had inherited his mother’s adorable features—silver hair with a touch of purple, an oval face exactly like his mother’s when she was young, and a pair of bright blue eyes. His sharp gaze showed a hint of his paternal heritage.

“Ara, Eru, you are paying more attention to the Silhouette Knights than your own father, just like a boy. Do you really like Silhouette Knights so much?”

“I heard that lots of kid dream of being a knight, Eru seems to think so too.”

Both parents smiled as they watched Eru display his curiosity for this boyish interest. He was so cute. The little boy watched the scene excitedly while waving his arms and legs, unfazed with being the center of attention. He focused on the training ground without blinking, displaying his exceptional concentration. The man rubbed his son’s soft hair for a while but gave up after getting no reaction.

“You really like them huh. How is it? Eru, those are Silhouette Knights, gigantic warriors that defend our kingdom.”

“Silhouette... Knight...”

The child seemed to acknowledge the words of the man for

the first time, repeating his words with a slur unique to toddlers as he fell deep into thought. The man smiled bitterly after seeing his child behave this way and returned to his post after conversing with his wife for a while. On the training ground, the gigantic knights finished their match and were preparing to leave.

“Right, let’s return home. We need to prepare dinner and wait for Daddy to return.”

The lady coaxed the child who kept looking back, reluctant to go. They were going home.

“Silhouette Knight...”

The child in her arms watched the gigantic knights on the training ground until they were out of sight.

The child’s full name, referred to as Eru, was Ernesti Echevarria. He was the son of Mathias Echevarria, instructor of Laihiala Pilot Academy, borne by his mother Celestina.

It had been three years since his birth. This was the age when a child formed his sense of self, a period when they became playful. But Eru was very sensible. He understood his parents from an early age and was well behaved. Everyone felt that he was a bright kid, but his intelligence came from another source.

Ever since forming his sense of self, the development of his own character, he became aware of memories he had never experienced before—the memory of a past where he lived in another place. A place called Japan, a the civilization of computers and the name Kurata Tsubasa.

A theory known as reincarnation.

Reincarnation described the phenomenon that occurred when the spirits of those who had died in the world were reborn into the world over and over again. It was mentioned in Buddhism, and all Japanese people would have heard about this theory whether they believed in it or not. Kurata was no exception, but he didn’t believe in it at that time and never expected to experience it himself. He had even retained the experiences from his previous life, a

successful reincarnation.

But himself included, no one truly knew what happened. The only thing he was sure of was that he was Ernesti in this world and was Kurata Tsubasa in his previous world. That was why, compared to children around his age, he had an ‘experienced’ mind and a calm, mature analytical ability.

Because of his mother’s whim, he visited his father’s workplace. The impact of this visit inspired him to devote his second chance at life to this.

When the sun started to set in the west, a lady and a child walked along the streets of Laihiala Academy.

The boy kept asking about the gigantic knights that he had seen, and his mother answered him gently and patiently. Looking at her excited son, the mother cheerfully replied:

“You really like Silhouette Knights don’t you, does Eru want to be a knight in the future?”

“Knight... Okay! I want to be a knight!”

“Ara, such a dependable child. Let’s ask Daddy to teach you when you get a little older alright?”

“Okay!”

No one knew what would occur because of this dimensional travel. But he was certain that his second life as Ernesti Echevarria was developing beyond his control.



The Echevarria residence was situated near Laihiala Academy.

Apart from this family, the people in this nation woke up early. As the sun was rising in the east, the young mother Celestina got up to prepare breakfast. When she was done, the whole family ate together as usual.

The only child of the family, Ernesti, awakened the latest.

“Silhouette Knight!”

Eru seemed to have dreamt of something as he kicked off his blanket and leapt up from bed. He was unaware of his mother laughing because of his yell. Eru looked around him, realized he was in the bedroom and climbed back into bed.

He was too excited last night and couldn't sleep. Instead, he lay in a dreamlike state, smiling in his bed.

‘Those are robots, and humanoid in shape, gigantic humanoid robots...!’

Ernesti—or rather the Japanese Kurata Tsubasa—shed a tear of joy in his heart for this unexpected blessing and couldn't stop smiling. Retaining the memories of Kurata Tsubasa meant that he inherited similar interests and hobbies from his previous life. In Eru's previous life he was Kurata Tsubasa, a heavily addicted robot otaku.

As a working adult, he spent almost all of his income on his hobby, browsing modeling magazines and games, even searching for visual works at times. He put in double the effort into his hobby compared to others, it wouldn't be wrong to say that he was obsessed. But despite his obsession, he was still an ordinary man. He didn't have the passion to join the Self-defense Force just for the chance to operate a tank. But the situation was different in this life. Indeed, gigantic humanoid robots—Silhouette Knights—actually existed here.

When he ‘awakened’, he was disappointed to find himself in a world with no models or computers. But he was grateful from the bottom of his heart for this miracle, be it by chance or the will of a mysterious force allowing him to reincarnate in this world, his disappointment changed when he had discovered Silhouette Knights. This was not a joke, gigantic humanoid weapons 10 meters in height actually existed. For a robot otaku like him, seeing the Silhouette Knights had enough impact to completely change his life. In other words, he believed the reason that he came to this world was to pilot these gigantic robots. He had no basis for it, but he still believed this strongly.

He had the resolve, but his tiny body lost to his sleepiness and he napped for a bit more before breakfast was ready.

It was almost noon, Celestina and Eru were in Mathias’s study room.

The study was filled with simple but practical wooden furniture that was kept clean and tidy. Mathias was primarily a sword instructor, but he was involved in other fields as well. The shelves in the study room were filled with all sorts of literature, including picture books for children.

Tina sat on the couch in the room, resting the tiny Eru on her lap, reading the picture book slowly to him. She spoke clearly and calmly. Eru, who was enjoying this yesterday, listened for some time before he started to fidget. He called out to his mother:

“Mom, Mom.”

“What is it Eru? You don’t like this book?”

Tina tilted her head, but Eru’s next words dispelled her confusion.

“I like books... But, I want to know more about Silhouette Knights!”

Tina set the book aside and studied Eru’s expression. Looking at his bright eyes filled with curiosity and joy, she couldn’t turn him down.

“Ara ara, I see. Although it is still early for you Eru, if you want to pilot the Silhouette Knights, you have to first become a knight.”

“Knight...how do I become a knight?”

Eru had a fixed goal in mind, but he was still a 3-year-old toddler body-wise. Even with the intellect of a grown man, his actions were still restricted, including the most crucial part, information-gathering. How would a toddler, with limited access to resources, obtain information? He had to rely on his parents.

“Let’s see, you need to read many books and practice swordsmanship. Right, let your Daddy teach you about swords. Your father teaches the sword in the academy anyway. How about reading your favorite book where Silhouette Knights make an appearance okay?”

“Okay!”

Eru finally focused back on the book. Tina rubbed his head, took out a book related to Silhouette Knights and read it to him slowly. Eru listened to the story that was simple enough for a child to understand excitedly.

Eru imagined himself piloting the gigantic knight, standing before humongous demon beasts in order to protect those in danger. He reforged his mind once again. He wanted to pilot a Silhouette Knight no matter what and the sooner the better. To achieve this, he needed to use his mature mindset to his advantage and achieve all he could within his power. He prepared a schedule for the future in his mind, but for now, he listened quietly to the story.



“Dad, do you have a minute?”

Mathias Echevarria, who was resting in the study, heard the voice from behind him. He turned and saw his son Ernesti Echevarria run toward him. Eru, who was now 5 years old, had a bowl cut, with his hair just above the eyebrows. He had bright silvery purple hair just like his mother; the resemblance to her cute appearance remained the same. Even the strict Mathias with his merciless face smiled often in front of Eru.

“Oh, I have time. What is it Eru?”

“I want to ask for a favor, Dad.”

Eru was young, but he spoke clearly. His slightly slurred speech when he was 3 was now smooth at the age of 5. This child had always been polite to everyone since he was young. As his speech grew clearer, this becomes more obvious. But this didn't feel weird and actually complemented his cute and small appearance. Mathias smiled happily as he looked at Eru's pleading face. His 'doting' towards his son had been getting worse over time.

“Dad, I want to be a knight, please teach me swordsmanship.”

It was finally time. Mathias was troubled, but he didn't show it on his face. He knew his son had been keen on being a knight ever since he was really young, and there was no problem with his goal. If he had the motivation, that would be great. But Eru was only 5 years old, so it was still too early to teach him swordsmanship. If they rushed it before Eru's body developed, it would be detrimental to him. Also, Eru looked more similar to his wife with every passing year and was smaller in stature than children in his age group. To be honest, Mathias wondered if his son could even handle a sword.

But Mathias still faced his son firmly. Since Eru was showing his resolve, he couldn't ignore this as an instructor or a father. Mathias advised his son not to rush and start from building up his

physical strength first. He also informed him that aside from swordsmanship, knowledge of magic would also help him in his quest to become a knight, encouraging him to study it.

“Magic... I understand Dad, I will seek your advice on swordsmanship in the future.”

Looking at the unwavering face of his son, Mathias nodded, promising to teach him swordsmanship one day.

“...That’s what happened Mom, please teach me magic!”

After making the promise with Mathias, Eru immediately went to Tina and asked her. Why was he asking his mother? Because Tina’s father, who was Eru’s grandfather, was the current dean of the Laihiala Pilot Academy—Lauri Echevarria. Tina accepted gladly, gathering the necessary teaching materials within her means.

—Magic.

It went without saying that in Eru’s previous life—back on Earth—magic did not exist, it appeared only in stories and fairy tales. Most people only heard about magic when playing role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons. But this powerful force existed in this world, and knights used magic often as support when fighting.

Under the guidance of his mother, who was doubling as a teacher, Eru read textbooks related to magic.

From the moment Eru decided to pilot a Silhouette Knight, Eru had started taking action. What he had been doing were the basics of the basics, simply learning to read. Learning to read at the age of 3 was a very early start. Even the privileged class of this country—the aristocrats—didn’t start so early. Because of this, Eru could handle materials that were quite advanced.

It was natural for kids to detest studying, but Eru was not a normal kid. All of his effort was for the goal of becoming a knight. When he thought about piloting a Silhouette Knight, studying was no hassle in comparison to the reward. He could even read through

textbooks from cover to cover. Because the contents were so stiff, it was better to treat them like a game and enjoy it instead of thinking of it as studying. With the fast learning pace unique only to children, Eru learned the contents at an incredible pace.



Tina was not a teacher by profession, but she was managing it smoothly. She was the daughter of a school dean and wife of an instructor after all. She satisfied the wishes of Eru, teaching him magic patiently.

—In simple terms, magic in this world referred to the skill in manipulating mana to perform physical phenomena.

All living things in this world had the ability to convert the ‘ether’ in the air into mana and store a certain amount of it within their body.

“Mana is something like fuel, magic will be used in accordance to the content of the magic script to do things in the physical world through a catalyst.”

Tina explained to Eru who was sitting down obediently.

There were two types of living beings in the world, divided into those who could use magic independently and those who couldn’t. The difference lay in the existence of a catalyst within their body. For beings that could use magic, they had a crystal within their body that acted as a catalyst. For example, the strongest creatures known as dragons possessed a catalyst, and their dragon breath was created using this.

“Humans don’t have catalysts inside them, so we are a race that can’t use magic.”

Since humans didn’t have a crystal catalyst, they couldn’t use magic. Based on the laws of this world, this was a natural and undeniable fact. But people had learned of a way to use magic. This was the result of using their weapon called wisdom. As living beings of this world, humans could make use of mana and external catalysts to develop scripts gradually to use magic, successfully overcoming their weakness.

With this breakthrough, humans, who were always the weakest in the world, developed gigantic magic-powered weapons after years of research—the Silhouette Knights. This made the humans one of the most powerful races.

“Mom, since the Silhouette Knights are so powerful, and we have such a huge army of knights, we can build a bigger country right?”

“Maybe it can be done, but it is difficult.”

Silhouette Knights might be powerful weapons, but they were tactical weapons that required large amounts of resources to build

and maintain. It was practically impossible to prepare a force capable of dominating the land. Humanity used the Aubigne Mountain Range as the border to maintain peace on the western half of the continent. Fremmevira remained behind as a screen to protect their foothold in the east. The stalemate had been going on for centuries.

“I will leave the details for history class. You will learn about it in more detail when you start schooling.”

Tina was talking about practical application of magic. As mentioned before, magic had to be conjured through scripts, and the construction and usage of scripts were performed by a virtual organ in the brain known as the Magius circuit. In this world, all beings that were self-aware had the potential to use it.

“And Eru, scripts are sigils that perform specific phenomena. First are the ‘Architect’² sigils that perform basic phenomena, followed by the ‘Control’ sigils that coordinate and use Architect sigils.”

By combining Architect and Control sigils, the picture created was something similar to magic summoning circles on earth.

For beginners in magic, the part they would stumble upon was the construction of the script. Most people could manipulate Architect sigils immediately, but using powerful spells by using more complex scripts required a great amount of practice. As humans couldn’t use magic naturally, creating high-level magic required the accumulation of experience. Apart from perseverance, this also required natural talent.

‘Architect sigils that determine the phenomenon and the control sigils that maximize its effects. Both of them combining by a set of fixed laws... Right, I have seen this before, this is just like...’

Eru’s occupation in his past life—programmer—helped him understand this part. In simple terms, the sigils and their interaction in the form of a script followed similar logic to program coding. The operation of the script by the magius circuit was similar to a virtual computer. Since the magius circuit was built within the brain, activating it didn’t take time, performing better than computers in his previous life.

After Eru grasped the logic behind it, he ‘extracted’ the architect sigil and control sigil from the textbook and started using his magius circuit—which was within the human brain—to start coding. With such a large amount of codes, even a veteran programmer wouldn’t be able to organize them within their head; they would need the help of software editors. To counter this, Eru used the magius circuit domain as a software editor to plan and compile the scripts.

Because he was a beginner, he had no idea how much magic the people in this world could use. He didn’t consider his ability to easily build and control the complicated programming language to be special.

Eru held a tiny wooden wand and focused with his eyes closed.

A small crystal was fixed onto the tip of the wand. That was the crystal catalyst, a miraculous item which allowed humans to use magic. For humans using magic, they preferred to wield wands with the crystal catalyst affixed onto the tip. The wand in Eru’s hand made a gentle *Pashu* sound, and a line of fire shot out, leaving a scorched mark in the middle of the target board. He just activated the fire architect sigil with beginner magic—‘Fire Torch’.

“Wow Eru, that’s great. Although it is just the architect sigil, I never imagined that you would be able to use magic so quickly.”

“But Mom, the textbook says that this is the basics of the basics, anyone can use it immediately.”

“It is true that anyone can activate it, but to hit the target so accurately requires practice. Eru has talent for magic.”

No matter how good Eru was at programming, it was useless if he only studied the theory without putting it in practice. A simple target board in the backyard and Tina accompanied Eru for practical training. They practiced all types of architect sigils one by one, allowing Eru to get used to the feeling of using magic. After casting spells repeatedly, Eru started to feel strange...it felt like energy was gradually draining from his body. It was like the fatigue you felt after exercise but different at the same time. This unique experience confused him, but this was a natural effect of expending

mana. He panted heavily and breathed in the ether from the air around him, attempting to replenish his mana.

‘... I didn’t know it was this tiring. If I used advanced spells, I would have probably fainted because of shortness of breath.’

Tina who had been supervising him walked over with a gentle smile and rubbed his head.

“This is how it feels when you expend mana. If you don’t experience it now, it will be troubling in the future.”

“...I can’t catch my breath, it feels painful. My mana is empty with just a little magic use, so depressing.”

“Don’t be discouraged. You are still young, lacking mana is normal.”

“Will I have more mana when I grow up?”

“Hmm—Let me think. It’s a bit different, but just think of it as something like stamina. The growth of mana is not solely dependent on your body growth. It will also get stronger as you train your psyche.”

“I understand. Mom, since that’s the case, I will be doing special training to increase my mana pool!”

Tina gave a bitter smile, rubbing the head of the spirited Eru.

“Ara, what a hard working child. Don’t be too impatient, going too fast might be bad too.”

Eru reflected upon this and felt that he was being too rash. Tina was right, rushing wouldn’t be good for him, and he didn’t want his mother who was accompanying him to worry.

“Yes, Mom. I will take it slow and steady.”

Eru promised his mother with a straight face. Tina nodded and hugged him tightly.

Eru started his special training the following day.



With the promise with Tina and the future in mind, he needed to improve his physical and magical abilities steadily. Constructing scripts was Eru's strength. He would be able to find a way to advance if he made use of his previous life's knowledge. The rest would depend on the mana he needed to use the magic. He persisted in his routine of jogging, physical exercise, depleting his mana and recovering it. As he was going through his fundamental training, he found an interesting magic in the textbook.

He was looking up Physical Boost spells. A physical boost meant literally strengthening the capability of your body, including strength, stamina and speed. Eru's plan was to incorporate this spell in his physical exercise, training both mind and body at the same time for efficiency.

The Physical Boost spell was a high-level spell, a spell that was difficult to use. The effects of the magic were dependent on the script. The simpler the structure, the closer it would be to the architect sigil, and conversely, the easier it would be to control; the more targets there were, the more complex and difficult it would become.

The complex, high-level spell Physical Boost had the ability of enhancing 'every muscle fiber', strengthening 'all of the bones' to absorb the impact and the improvement of durability of the skin. There was a need to control the target of the spell, which changed rapidly with every movement. To use the effect, the script needed to be activated constantly. This was why the boosting spell was on a

higher level than big, flashy spells, which did not require constant upkeep to maintain.

Normally, Eru would have given up at this stage and would have chosen a more practical spell. But he knew how to solve the issue because of his unique skills—his programming concepts. He had experience in designing and coding software to handle multiple variables. That was why he skipped the beginner magic phase and jumped straight into the ‘modified magic’ phase. Reviewing the structure of the Physical Boost script, Eru compressed the structure to minimize the number of variables, creating subscripts that would automatically extract the status of the body. After compiling it, he just needed to design the user interface to make it easier to control so as to lessen the burden.

Complicated projects like the improvement of scripts were not something that could be easily done by anyone. Eru, however, was not aware of this, completing the improvement shortly, and the patch was a big enhancement. But even so, it was still difficult to control magic that strained the mind heavily. But with his extraordinary processing ability, it was not much. No one realized that a historical revolution had occurred, but for Eru, this was just a small step in his journey.

Everything was ready. Eru held a wand in his hand, activated the improved Physical Boost spell and began his daily training regime excitedly. But his high-spirited trip ended in tragedy, he didn’t even have time to feel moved by his enhanced physical attributes before collapsing a few hundred meters away because of mana depletion.

As expected of an advanced spell, the controls were complicated and the mana cost was tremendous. Eru felt down because of this basic mistake and returned to his normal training regime for quite a while.

Even with the efforts he put in, he still needed 3 years before he could activate his physical boost magic for a sustainable amount of time. Eru was fueled by his passion, moving towards his goal day by day.

Chapter 2: Let's play with friends

The Laihiala Pilot Academy had a dormitory, several restaurants and all sorts of shops. Various Silhouette Knight repair shops were gathered there as well, including lodging for related personnel, forming a large college city. Because Laihiala Pilot Academy was the top academic facility in the nation, the size of the city was not far off from the capital itself. The city adopted its name from the academy and was known as 'Laihiala Academy City', Ernesti resided in such a place.

The sun set beyond the walls that surrounded the city and night engulfed the academy city. Apart from a select few, most of the shops had closed for the day, only a handful of people still wandering the streets. The whole city fell into a peaceful silence. A petite figure ran along a path formed by the rooftops of the buildings. The figure was dressed in black that was difficult to see in the dark, moving like the wind along the roof.

And of course, this was the 8-year-old Ernesti Echevarria. With the passage of time, his training had evolved from simple jogging into a round trip along the roofs of the buildings in the city. According to Eru, the wide field of vision and the undulating height of the buildings was perfect for training.

He learned from his failure in using the Physical Boost spell in the past and further improved it, changing it into a spell with low mana cost, emphasizing just the legs for running. He had become accustomed to it, even strenuous movement wouldn't affect the script. His enhanced legs enabled him to sprint at a very fast pace.

As he ran, Eru came to the edge of a line of connected buildings; the edge was akin to a cliff with the road looming below. He took a deep breath, increasing his mana output. With the fierce

reaction, he accelerated like an arrow fired from a bow, closing the gap to the edge in an instant. The moment he took his last step and leapt into the air he activated another spell—by compressing the air in front of him, he created a dense air bullet. This was originally basic wind magic, Air Bullet. Eru exploded the Air Bullet behind him, using the burst of energy from the release to push him forward.

The instantaneous acceleration threw Eru's body into the air, forming a beautiful arch in the sky. He activated his body-strengthening magic in midair and cast another spell just before he landed. Another Air Bullet spell—but the area of compressed air was much larger. He didn't fire off the Air Bullet like before. Instead, he used it as a cushion, landing nicely on the other roof. Eru rolled to reduce the impact, running off with the same speed as before.

The year was C.E. 1273.

It had been 3 years since Eru started his magic training. He practiced daily without rest, accumulating a large amount of mana within his petite body. Normally, a child wouldn't train so intensively in magic at such a young age, so it was not surprising for Eru to have grown so strong. The regime also trained his physical attributes, which increased dramatically, but it was a pity he couldn't use full body-strengthening spells for an extended amount of time. That was why he invented low-mana cost spells targeted at specific body parts, only using his full strength when necessary. He had also found a way to use other spells while moving at high speeds. This training allowed Eru's outstanding processing ability to improve, increasing his mana pool while decreasing the mana expended.

There was a reason why Eru focused his magic on movement. He didn't spend all of his time on training, making time to play with other kids his age, so his parents wouldn't worry. Despite his reasons, he couldn't deny that playing like a kid again was fun. Eru slowly realized that his body was smaller than others, but he was not too bothered about it. If his growth remained stagnant, however, Eru's lack of weight might become his weak point.

Naturally, Eru planned to continue training his magic, not willing to fail because of his lack of abilities. Even so, his body

being so light meant he had to put more consideration in regard to attack power. This was the reason he chose to strengthen his mobility. The speed would both disrupt enemies and increase attack power.

‘That’s right, just like Ushi Wakamaru³ overcoming strength with skills, the Japanese way. Eh, although I didn’t have much choice anyway.’

Eru thought about these menial things as he ran in the dim street during the evening. A normal training route, the daily jogging regime, but something unexpected happened.

“Eh? Someone is coming.” A girly voice came from above. A stern voice followed: “Who are you?”

“...Is someone there?” The questions from both parties overlapped each other. Eru had never ran into anyone during his rooftop training before, this was the first time he did.

They remained silent for quite a while. They met someone at a place that was normally devoid of people, so it was understandable to be cautious. One of them was dressed in black with his hood up, a suspicious outfit.

Eru observed the other party. The weak starlight made visibility low, but he could vaguely make out that they were a boy and girl pair about his age. Eru was shorter than average, while the two of them were relatively tall and thin. At a glance they didn’t look younger than Eru, but not much older either.

He couldn’t make any headway with this silence, so Eru introduced himself.

“Evening, I am Ernesti, in the middle of a stroll. And you are?”

The two who were wary of this youth in black were stunned by the sudden introduction. Eru couldn’t make out the delicate changes in facial expression, but from the reflection of the moonlight, he knew the young boy squinted his eyes.

“I am Archid, this is my younger sister...”

“Adeltrud... Eh, we were watching the stars...that’s right.”

Eru looked at the ceiling window behind them; the couple probably came up from there. The sudden encounter surprised them, but it was simply a coincidence. Eru decided to continue jogging.

“I see, sorry to disturb you. I will take my leave...”

“Wa...Wait, don’t go yet. A stroll you say? On the rooftop wearing that?”

“Don’t you think that is strange?”

“Hm, that’s true.”

Eru could tell they were taken aback from their tones. Even Eru would have been suspicious if he was in their shoes.

“I said it was a stroll, but it is closer to being special training. That’s why I chose a place that is difficult to run on.”

“Eh... Do you really need to run on the roof? That’s weird.”

A simple matter to Eru was unthinkable strange to them. They looked at each other with skeptical faces and asked while tilting their heads.

“...Hmmm, forget it. That means we are interrupting your training.”

“Please don’t mind me. Well, I should be...”

“Hey hey, wait! You said this is special training, so you run around this place everyday?”

Adeltrud stopped Eru who was ready to go. Eru stumbled a bit and replied ‘Yes’ and took off again. The two of them followed Eru with their eyes as he disappeared into the shadows... His

extraordinary speed surprised them as they watched Eru accelerate and leap off the edge of the roof. The large arc of his jump stunned them again.

“...Amazing, really amazing! What is that? That looks fun!”

“Wah, he is really running! Incredible, he flew off from the edge of the roof!?”

Archid and Adeltrud were excited after Eru left. They were stargazing out on the roof because of some unhappy events and had an amazing encounter. Their life changed drastically because of this encounter.

Eru, Archid and Adeltrud met again the very next day at the same place. Unlike the encounter before, the two of them seemed to be waiting for Eru. Eru gave up any thoughts of avoiding them and greeted:

“Evening. Watching the stars again?”

“Yo. Nope, we are here to see you.”

“Yup...”

The pair smiled happily, visible even under the faint starlight. Eru wasn't sure of their intentions, but decided to go along with them. He could just run away if things go awry and pick another running route in the future.

“Erm, do you have to cover your head?”

Archid pointed out. Eru thought it was rude too, so he removed his hood and sat on the roof like they did. “What is this about?” Eru pressed them. He noticed the two of them stiffened with awkward expressions on their faces.

“Eh, your names are Archid and Adeltrud right? What is it? Why the weird reaction?”

“Eh? Oh, nothing. You...You are a girl!?”

“You move so fast, I thought you were a boy...”

Eru, whose image took after his mother, had grown even more adorable with age and was now a ‘pretty girl’. The silver-purple hair that reached just over his chin was cut to shoulder length, swaying in the wind. The dim moonlight failed to hide his face. In fact, the faint light on his smooth skin gave his face a magical air. The pretty face didn’t match the amazing movements they saw the day before, confusing the pair. Eru looked at the two children with slanted eyes and said:

“No, I look like my mother, but I really am a boy.”

“...No, there is a limit to how much you take after your mother. Are you really a boy?”

“It’s true; I have nothing to gain from a lie like this.”

“Oh... How...How cute, Ernesti...”

Adeltrud drew closer with her hands for some reason, and Eru stepped back when he sensed danger. Archid grabbed Adeltrud’s collar and pulled her back immediately.

“Eh... Ah, my name is hard to articulate, just call me Eru.”

“Ah, you can call me Chid.”

“I will address you as Eru then! I am Ady!”

After the round of introductions, Eru was wary of Ady who looked ready to pounce on him as he said:

“And so? What did you want to talk about?”

“Right, after you left yesterday, didn’t you jump really high from the roof? How did you do that ?”

“Ah, that...”

“Also, please teach us the technique!”

Where did their wariness from yesterday go? Chid was chatting with him like they were old friends. Eru didn't understand why Chid was so excited.

"I can show you, but it will take a long time okay?"

"No worries. If we train with you, we can fly like you did one day right?"

"But you might be stuck at a bottleneck before that happens too..."

Eru warned and started to explain his training in simple terms...the content about magic. Chid and Ady were quite clever, picking up the difficult content at a good pace. Because they understood the content, they frowned at the task ahead.

"Isn't that grueling!"

"Eru is so amazing..."

"Didn't I tell you at the very beginning?"

The stunned duo groaned, then lifted their heads as if they had just thought of something.

"By the way, why is your magic so powerful?"

"...That is because of compatibility, and I have been training for some years."

"Some years... How old are you?"

"Eight."

"Eh!? That's the same as us!?"

Ady was impressed. Compared to the explanation earlier, this was more stunning. Chid and Ady seemed to be twins, both of them were eight years old just like Eru. Chid was in high spirits after hearing this, dismissing all of his worries. He had a face that said

‘alright, we have to do this’ and was fired up. Eru warned Chid who was raring to go:

“Physical Boost is a high-level spell; you can’t use it without starting from the basics.”

“Then just ask about magic.”

“...Hmm?”

“You are strong right? You know lots of high-level spells!”

“You might be cute, but you are also dependable!”

Eru’s face began to cramp. This development was beyond his expectations and had nothing to do with cuteness. Their request was troubling; he wanted to escape if at all possible. But when he saw Chid and Ady talking enthusiastically about the training regime, his conscience could not allow him to ignore them.

“Ah... This.... Eh, I understand. I will...teach both of you magic...”

“Great, I knew you were a bro!”

“Wonderful, no wonder you are so cute!”

“You are overestimating me, and this has nothing to do with being cute!? Wait, like I said, magic cannot be learned immediately. You have to start from the basics, understand?”

“I know, I know, don’t worry. We will catch up to you in a flash!”

He felt uneasy with Chid who accepted so readily, but Eru still confirmed the training details with them before they parted ways.



The following day, the twins visited Eru's home. Not at night but during the day.

Because they had only met under the moonlight until now, Eru finally saw their beautiful black hair and hazel eyes. The brunette twins reminded Eru of Japan, and he felt a sense of kinship with them. Chid's messy hair was short while Ady's slightly wavy hair reached her shoulders. They really were twins, having similar physiques and strong eyes.

"Welcome to my humble abode, please come in."

Eru gave up any resistance and ushered them in. The Echevarria residence was slightly bigger than their neighbors' because of their relations with both the dean and an instructor of Laihiala Pilot Academy. Chid and Ady looked around curiously as they followed Eru.

Eru's mother, Celestina, welcomed them warmly. Her son who seldom brought friends home had two guests with him at the same time. She was a great cook and showed off her skill, making her guests feel at home with her snacks and beverages. Ady was really delighted, she hit it off well with Tina and was about to follow her into the kitchen to make snacks but was dragged off forcefully by Chid.

After the disruption, they went into Eru's room to learn basic magic. Eru's room was very tidy. There was only a table, a bed and several shelves along the wall. The shelves had textbooks related to magic, along with some storybooks for display. For preschool children, this room was too practical. The twins (especially Ady) were planning to snoop around the room but were stopped by Eru.

After this episode, the magic lesson finally began. Eru used

the magic textbook he liked the most as the teaching material, starting from the fundamentals. He thought that the pair was too confident and believed that because they were 8 years old, they would grow tired of it and give up immediately. But Chid and Ady were surprisingly passionate about their studies. When they started their architect sigil practical session, they displayed admirable control, hitting the bull's-eye after a few attempts.

Eru remembered their dialogue yesterday. Did they understand the explanation about magic immediately? This meant the twins were excellent. Eru reflected on underestimating them as he gave feedback to the duo that collapsed after depleting their mana.

“What you are feeling is mana depletion because your mana pool is too small. You should start by building up your mana capacity through training.”

“*Huff huff*, this is tiring. So... How do we do this special training?”

“Deplete your mana every day. Your mana pool will grow faster than doing nothing. And it will be best to do some exercise, you can train your body and magic at the same time, it's more efficient that way.”

“...Oh, that's why you are jogging on rooftops?”

“Yes. I told you it's not simple.”

“That's right, but I still want to do it! I just need to keep this up every day! Isn't that 'simple'?”

Eru was surprised. He turned around to see Ady who had caught her breath with both hands on her hips, looking fearless. Her eyes were filled with determination and confidence and a hint of a smile showed on her face. He looked at Ady, thinking nonchalantly, *'She is tall and will become a beauty in the future, but she is hard to handle.'*

“...I see, please work on your architect sigils for now. You will be able to do special training with me after your mana pool grows.”

“I don’t know when we can catch up to you... But it will definitely be sooner than you think!”

“Of course! Just watch us; we will reach your standard in no time!”

Eru’s impression of his first ‘good friends’ was improving gradually.

‘They are tougher than I thought. I made some pretty interesting friends.’

And so, Eru’s training now included the twins Archid Olter and Adeltrud Olter. His life had gotten livelier.

Eru was not just learning magic. When he had spare time from his magical and physical training, he was also learning swordsmanship as promised by his father, Mathias. This was the standard swordsmanship from the curriculum of Laihiala Pilot Academy. Chid and Ady also joined in.

Of the three, Chid was the most talented in the sword. His build was great for his age, which allowed him to surpass Eru in no time. His stance was proper and would never lose to anyone in a simulation battle.

They practiced the sword along with their magic. Compared to other children their age, the trio was incredibly busy. Eru did the necessary training in order to achieve his goal. He had gotten used to it after such a long time, so he didn’t find it intolerable. He felt that he did not push himself hard enough in his previous life, which motivated him to strive further. Eru realized the biggest motivation for humans manifested from their desire.

But what about Chid and Ady? They harbored the same passion as Eru, living each day to the fullest. Eru’s training already surpassed normal standards; there was no need to burden normal children with this. If they were aiming to be a knight, there was no need to work so hard. But they never complained about it.

‘What motivates the twins?’ Eru couldn’t think of any reason for them to work so hard.

Even with their busy schedule, they didn't only train. They made time to spend with their parents or play with other children around their age. With the largest academy in the nation, the children had plenty of playmates.

The kingdom of Fremmevira had a problem unique to it, which was the existence of the demon beasts. The situation here was different from the region west of the Aubigne Mountains, the kingdom of Fremmevira shared a border with the Bocuse Forest ruled by the demon beasts. Demon beasts often attacked, threatening the lives and property of citizens causing the people to live in fear. Hence, the cities of Fremmevira had strong walls erected around them, protecting the towns and citizens.

—Everyone in Fremmevira agreed to the construction of the walls, but the playful children found life within the walls to be dull and stifling. To expend their energy, they treated the entire city as their playground, playing around noisily. The sound of the children's laughter could be heard on the streets every day.

It was no different this day, a group of kids dashed along the pavement. But on closer inspection, a child had fallen far behind.

“What are you doing...slow tortoise...”

When he heard the jeers of the children, the kid who had fallen behind stopped, panting, and waved his arms while protesting:

“*Huff, huff*.... It...It can't be helped! We Dwarves can't run that fast!”

This protesting child was shorter than the rest; he had a strong and stout body along with short legs, a sturdy albeit slow build.

“Ah... Batson is slow...”

“What did you say? Damn...!”

“Slow Batson is angry! It will hurt if it gets you...! Run away...!”

The child named Batson was red from anger, running along with heavy steps, but he couldn't compensate for his short strides. The children dispersed with a laugh every time he drew near, leaving the lonesome Batson behind.

“...Ku, damn...”

He clenched his fists in frustration. He was helpless about this, being slow was a racial flaw of Dwarves.

Dwarves...a race originating from the northern mountains.

They lived among treacherous, snowy peaks, residing within caves. As time went on, they started excavating deeper and became skilled miners. While refining and processing the rich minerals in the northern hills, the Dwarves became experts with all sorts of mineral resources, advancing their skills in crafting with them. They were renowned as the 'crafting race'.

Because of their environment, the Dwarves had evolved over time in order to move nimbly in narrow caves. Their short but stout stature was their most prominent physical trait. They were also covered in muscle, having double the arm strength of normal humans. They were rugged in appearance; the men had thick long hair and beards which started growing at the age of ten. By the way, their culture emphasized how spectacular their beards were and all men took pride in them.

But the isolated Dwarves didn't spend their entire history hiding in the north. There were many Dwarves that used their skills to set up smithies all across the land.

The child mentioned just now...Batson Termonen was one of those Dwarves. His parents had a smithy in Laihiala Academy City, the reason why he was playing with the local children. The games of children revolved around chasing each other or hide-and-seek, especially so for a city surrounded by walls. Batson didn't know how tough it was to live in such an enclosed environment with his short stride. He was also mocked for his appearance by the kids in the neighborhood.

The children making fun of Batson were long gone. Batson

gave up, heading home in disgust.

“Weird. Are you alone? Where are the others?”

The fuming Batson heard someone talking to him and saw the trio when he turned his head. The one in the middle was especially short, like a valley between two mountains. It was the trio of Ernesti, Archid and Adeltrud.

“It’s Eru. You guys are probably looking down on me for being slow too.”

The three of them were baffled by Batson’s response but quickly understood the situation. The Dwarves might be slow, but they were also strong and powerful. This meant Batson would be incredibly strong in a fight. He wouldn’t lose against multiple enemies if it came to a dogfight. Batson had an argument with someone and achieved overwhelming victory in the ensuing fight, which was the reason for the current situation.

As Eru watched Batson walk away, he felt like pulling some pranks and laughed mischievously:

“Ah, he was bullied again... Alright, let’s go after those guys everyone.”

The twins listened to Eru’s suggestion and answered indifferently:

“I’m fine with that, but how? We are fine, but Batson can’t keep up.”

“Right, that’s why we will bring him along. Just treat it as normal training with Batson as training weight.”

“Oh! I get it!”

“Let’s go, let’s go!”

Chid and Ady understood what Eru was saying and stood on either side of Batson. They didn’t consider how Batson felt and grabbed his arms.

“Eh? Hey... Hey! What are you...”

“Well, let’s start our jogging exercise for the day!”

Chid and Ady started moving on Eru’s command, ignoring the confused Batson. They treated Batson like cargo and carried him. This technique could only be used after learning ‘Limited Physical Boost’, allowing them to use strength above their physical limit. Batson was stunned by their amazing speed, unable to resist.

“They must be at the central square! Let’s attack!”

“Ora!”

“Yeah!”

“Like I said, what’s happening...!?”

Laihiala Academy City was roughly divided between the school campus and the urban zone. In the heart of the urban zone, there was an open space known as the Central Square to everyone. It was filled with stalls during the day and was the gathering point for all the children.

“Hey, will that guy catch up?”

“There is no way, he’s too slow...”

“That’s right; it will hurt like hell if you get hit by him!”

“Relax; just run away if he shows up. He is slow, you can get away easily.”

They were the kids that made fun of Batson earlier. The group used some boxes as stools, biting into fruits they bought from some stall. They were gleeful from their successful revenge. Suddenly, they heard a loud scream from far away.

“Ahhhhh... Woah...!”

“Out of the way!”

“Where are you going! You guys better...!”

They noticed a familiar voice, which surprised them. Wasn't that Batson who was just jeered at by them? The one person they wanted to avoid? The group searched for the origin of the voice and saw Chid and Ady carrying Batson by the arms and approaching fast. They panicked and screamed:

“Woah, what...what are you...!?”

“Ah, found them. Now, Batson...launch!”

Eru pointed out the target while Chid and Ady threw Batson with mischievous smiles without slowing down. With a running start and a powerful throw, the short but heavy Batson flew through the sky. The group of children were slow to react, watching Batson as he arced through the air slack-jawed. When they realized they were the landing point, the kids scrambled to get away in a panic.

“Eh! Wah, idiot, don't come here!”

“Woahhhh, quick...hide...”

But it was too late to run. They were hit directly by Batson's rock-hard head, the force smashing the boxes into pieces. They fell all over the place under a cloud of dust. It was so chaotic that the masterminds, Eru and his friends, felt guilty as they looked at each other.

“...Did we...go too far?”

“Yeah... Right on target.”

“Hey... I have an idea. I think we should get out of here.”



“You three! Don’t run!”

Batson shrugged off the broken boxes and stood up among the debris. As expected, the first to recover was the tough Batson, the rest of the children were still down. Batson was furious, sprinting towards the trio with a speed beyond any Dwarf. The moronic three ran immediately.

“Goodbye, see you later!”

“Shut up, stay where you are!”

By the way, the kids left behind were caught by the adults and lectured for breaking the boxes.

Some distance away from the central square and residential area was a shopping mall. There was a building double the size of the surrounding ones. It emphasized sturdiness more than appearance. This was the smithy ‘Termonen Workshop’.

Batson chased Eru and the others all over the streets and finally ended up here. Compared to Eru and company, Batson was on the verge of dying of exhaustion after the chase.

“You... You guys...are too fast...”

“Thanks to our daily training.”

“*Huff*...how did you train to be so good...”

Eru smiled casually. In terms of stamina, Batson had the edge, but he couldn’t match up to Eru and his magic.

“Ah...forget it, I don’t care anymore.”

Batson was exhausted and felt that all of this was just silly. He gave up and laid on the ground with his limbs spread out and finally caught his breath after a long while. He gave a contented smile and laughed softly.

“But it was fun smashing into them head-on.”

“Hey hey, we can do it again if you like it.”

“No way.”

After a short while, Batson stood up calmly and pointed to his house.

“Eh, alright. Want to visit my place? I’m thirsty.”

Maybe it was because they were near the workshop, they could feel the heat even from outside. Batson’s craftsmen parents

were probably working there.

“Oh, I have never been to your place.”

“Yeah... You will get hit if you disturb them. Don't be too rowdy.”

The trio entered Batson's home and saw his father and a few blacksmiths working in silence. Batson's father had a long beard and a wide body, it was easy to tell that he was a Dwarf. His punches were no joke.

Opposite the work tables was the shop front with the finished merchandise on display. Batson explained about each one of them with pride.

“Look, all of these are made by my dad.”

All sorts of metallic equipment could be seen, from swords, lances, shields and armor to woks and pots. As expected of a Dwarven blacksmith, they were made delicately. Every one of them was a masterpiece made to the perfect size and color.

“Woah... Your place is selling lots of stuff.”

Eru browsed the merchandise curiously while Ady followed him. Chid grew excited when he saw the weapons such as swords and lances. Batson was extremely pleased when they praised his father's work.

“Hey Bat, do you craft things too?”

“Ah...my dad seldom lets me touch metal, but I can do carpentry. I am a Dwarf after all; even my dad praises my work!”

After hearing Ady's whimsical query, Batson pointed to an item in the corner of the shop. There were some simple wooden household items there. They looked plain, but the workmanship was good and durable. Batson's skill was clear to see, and the trio was impressed. At this point, something in the corner attracted Eru's attention.

“Can you make ‘magic staves’?”

“...Magic staves? I can make them if there are enough materials. I made these to earn some pocket change.”

In order to use magic, humans had to use external ‘crystal catalysts’ to convert mana into physical phenomena, and a magic staff was the most common example of that. Simply put, the crystal catalyst was attached to the end of the staff for ease of use.

Most staves were made from trees called ‘White Mist’. Because the wood from these trees was an excellent mana conductor, it was a popular magic ingredient. The plain staff crafted by Batson was also made from that.

“When practicing magic, I always felt that...”

Eru shifted his gaze to the staff on his waist. It was the magic item he had been using since the very beginning. It was shorter than most staves and fit well with his small stature.

“What is it? Something wrong with your staff?”

Eru twirled the short wand in his hand and smiled at the confused Batson:

“Don’t you think a magic staff is unwieldy?”

Besides Batson, Chid and Ady were puzzled by Eru’s comment. They had gotten used to using the staff as a tool to use magic and had no complaints. They didn’t understand what he meant.

Eru thought it didn’t feel right because of the memories of his previous life. Because he remembered the world where science was king, he felt that this was awkward and primitive. Strictly speaking, magic staves were items used to cast spells. Apart from ‘strengthening’ magic, human spells were usually ‘shot’, releasing powerful effects. Eru assumed that a magic staff was a type of ‘projectile weapon’.

Eru recalled a scene from his past in Japan...a room filled

with models. Among these collections, he owned an airsoft gun, a realistic-looking 'Winchester M1894' rifle, which left a deep impression on him. Firearms, especially rifles, resembled magic staves. The correlation made him think there was a way to implement the shape of the rifle onto a magic staff.

"For example, the knights fight with a sword and staff in each hand..."

Even the knights, whose main weapons were swords, knew the importance of magic. Right-handed knights held the longsword with their dominant hand and the staff with the other hand. If a shield was equipped on the left hand, they would normally hold the staff behind the shield.

"I think it is a hassle to hold them separately, that's why I have been thinking about combining them."

"I don't get it... But even if it can be done, how do you want to go about it?"

As he thought, Eru had a stroke of inspiration. Guns and swords...these two simple terms made him think about bayonets on rifles. It was simply attaching a knife to the tip of a gun barrel, using the rifle as a melee weapon. This concept was brought to this alternate world by Eru.

"Yeah, I just thought of an interesting idea."

Eru smiled gently, making Batson feel a chill run down his back.

Later, Eru returned home, sat in front of a table and drew the design he had in mind. His focus surprised Chid and Ady who tagged along.

"What is that? What a weird staff."

That was the first thing Ady said after looking at the finished diagram. 'Bayonet'...a rifle that fired spells with a blade mounted upon it, the first 'magic staff' of its kind. For Ady who had only seen normal magic staves, it was very exotic.

The next day, Eru visited Batson's home again with the design in hand.

"Like I mentioned yesterday, can you make a staff like this?"

Batson was at a loss as he stared at the unexpected guest who had showed up with a design in hand after just one day. He decided to look at the plan first and started confirming the details. Batson made a strange face.

"Eru, what...is this?"

"Winchester Rifle."

"What? I've never heard of a staff by that name, and the shape...is weird... Why is the bottom so wide? And what is with this protruding piece here?"

"Well, this is known as the stock..."

Some things couldn't be explained with just a design drawing. Eru answered Batson's queries and explained in detail.

"Eh, I will give it a shot."

Batson didn't really understand, but he took on the job anyway. He promised Eru he would craft this strange magic staff. Eru was relieved and felt that this was a good chance to see Batson's artisan work.

Several days later, Eru visited Batson's place for the third time on Batson's invitation. The unique weapon designed by him was presented in physical form.

The handle resembled the stock of a rifle, thick and slightly bent, but there were no triggers. A crystal catalyst was attached to the tip of the part where the sight of a gun should be. There were no chambers and magazines as it was not an actual gun. In place of the barrel was a short sword fixed in place. This was the bayonet designed in this alternate world—"Gun Staff".

"The carpentry is done by me, my dad helped me with the

metallic bits.”

“Did he lecture you? If it was too much trouble, making all of it out of wood would have been fine too.”

When Eru visited a few days ago, he heard that Batson’s father was very busy. Eru did not want to press him and just asked Batson to do what he could.

“Eh, for some reason he was very interested when I was making it and gave me a hand.”

Eru nodded in agreement. He thanked Batson and took ‘that’ in his hand hurriedly. He tested out the size, weight and balance, the finished product was no different from the design. The Dwarves were incredible, their skills truly astounding.

“Alright, I completed it as you asked...it turned out weirdly, what do you plan to do?”

“It will be quicker to show you.”

Eru tried wielding the ‘staff’ and asked Batson for a place to test out magic. The two of them headed to the yard behind the smithy where a few target boards meant to test out swords were erected. Eru aimed at one and slashed at it, casting an intermediate wind spell just before it hit—Sonic Blade. He used the crystal catalyst on the staff to convert mana into physical form, emitting a shock wave from the blade and split the target cleanly in half. Eru took aim at the top half that was falling and cast an intermediate fire spell—Fireball. It connected with the target and exploded, leaving a cloud of dust in its wake. The incredible performance of the staff made Eru smile, but Batson was stunned.

“How should I put this. This is too weird and out of this world.”

“Eh. Let’s leave it at that. Batson, you did great! Seems that using magic in the future will be interesting!”

“Eh, as long as you are happy.”

“By the way, can you make another one for me?”

“Don’t be so shameless with your request.”

Eru received the second bayonet staff that he wanted. These two bayonet staves officially named ‘Winchester’ were kept in a specially made sheath worn around his waist. Eru kept them with him at all times.

The completion of the gun staff, which was suitable for close quarters fighting and ranged combat, was the key to enhancing his mobility and firepower, influencing his fighting style greatly.

Chapter 3: Let's go to school

One day, Ernesti sat with his arms crossed in the living room at home, thinking with a serious face. The reason was the letter spread on the table before him with 'Laihiala Pilot Academy Student Prospectus' written at the top. At the age of 8.5 years, he finally received an offer to attend Laihiala Pilot Academy.

Eru's family resided in Laihiala Academy City, named after the best education facility in Fremmevira, Laihiala Pilot Academy. The education system was divided into three stages, primary school from age 9, middle school from age 12, and high school from age 15, taking three years for each stage. Most students only completed the first six years of school because high school was similar to college on Earth, intended for students who sought further specialized education. It was customary to recognize all those above the age of 15 as adults. Most people started their career around the age of 18, but depending upon the circumstances, some might join the workforce at 15.

Even though Laihiala Academy had the term 'pilot' in the name, not everyone enrolling had the goal of being a knight or a Knight Runner. One reason was the sponsorship from the kingdom for primary and middle school education, so children from all social standings studied there. Fremmevira's education system differed from modern compulsory education, a result of the special circumstances of the nation.

Fremmevira was known as the 'Kingdom of Knights'. Its name sounded great, but it actually meant that 'battles' occurred frequently. There was a large number of demon beasts lurking on the outskirts of the nation where the majority of the citizens were defenseless farmers working on the vast fields, making them vulnerable to attacks. The threat had always been there. In order to

secure a steady supply of taxes and food, protection of the farmers became an important policy of the nation, but Fremmevira did not plan to eradicate all of the demon beasts because they appeared to be infinite.

The knights existed to protect the citizens, but there were lapses in their defenses due to the large area under their protection. The knights were usually deployed after the discovery of a demon beast, which was a passive strategy. This meant the citizens would be under threat before the knights moved in to intercept. With this historical background, at some point the farmers hoped to possess skills to protect themselves, which was fulfilled by the nation in short order by setting up a ministry and related facilities to teach them the minimum combat techniques and magic knowledge needed for defense. In the end, Fremmevira was not a peaceful nation; even the farmers needed to pick up weapons to defend themselves.

There was opposition among the aristocrats ruling the country on educating the lowly farmers to fight, but the policy remained in place to keep the nation running. Based on the end results, the policy was a success. By pushing for a minimum standard of education among all people, it unified the citizens and their concept of pride as a nation. The improvement in domestic security was also a lucky bonus.

With this back-story, a trend of setting up education facilities was started all over the country. Laihiala Pilot Academy took advantage of its geographic location near the capital and enrolled students who were peasants, merchants and even nobles. The academy was thus divided into an agricultural department, business department, piloting department, etc. All majors included classes on combat techniques, but most of the curriculum was tailored to make the students employable. The school held many different classes to accommodate the family circumstances of its students as well. Students needed to attend at least 3 years of classes and achieve a certain level of skill proficiency to graduate.

Chid and Ady sat beside Eru who was studying the prospectus seriously. They had already flipped through the prospectus and were eating the snacks on the table. When the snacks were almost gone, Eru was still deep in thought, which surprised them.

“Hey, what’s troubling you? You wanted to be a knight right? Just take the knighthood major.”

“Erm, that was my plan... But there is something bothering me.”

“Bothering you? Is it something like ‘the knighthood major is too easy’?”

“No, that’s not it... My goal from the very beginning was to be a Knight Runner.”

Knights certified to ride on Silhouette Knights were known as Knight Runners. Eru’s family knew about his ambition, and Chid and Ady had heard about it several times, too.

“The number of Silhouette Knights is limited, and only the elites of the knighthood major can become pilots. The knighthood major will take 6 years to complete and is followed by the piloting course. When all of that is completed including the deployment process... It will be a long time before I am actually riding a Silhouette Knight.”

It was not easy to become a Knight Runner; Silhouette Knights were ‘weapons’, something created to protect the nation. That was why it required years of training before it was possible to pilot one.

Eru thought about it for a while and faced Mathias.

“Father, I have a question, does the knighthood major allow the skipping of grades?”

Mathias frowned, his son had asked something difficult. He understood Eru’s worries and also knew how tough it would be.

“With the effort you put in and your magical capabilities, that is certainly possible...but the knighthood major is different. Not only are you tested on your sword and magic powers, you will also go through ethics lessons, and you have never learned about ethics officially correct?”

This was a blind spot. Mathias continued with a troubled

expression:

“Silhouette Knight pilot training is the final class before you enter pilot school. Students usually enroll at age 15... But for you...eh, if you are not tall enough, there won't be a suitable machine for you to pilot.”

Everyone looked at Eru, and the scene fell into a hellish silence. Eru was smaller than the peers in his age group, which was obvious compared to the Olter siblings beside him. But no one thought this part would be important.

Eru looked down in utter disappointment. He would need to wait 7 more years to pilot the giant robots of his dreams. He didn't mind waiting, but no one would blame him for thinking the process was taking too long. But not everything would go your way. Eru wanted to change the mood in the room when he felt a shadow loom over him. He lifted his head and saw Tina standing before him.

“I'm sorry Eru. Because you look like me...your height...”

Seeing his mother rubbing his head with an apologetic face, Eru opened his eyes wide and shook his head.

“That's not it! Mother, it doesn't matter! I am still young, and this is not the only way...”

Eru stopped suddenly as he remembered something, surprised by his own words and closed his mouth slowly. This inspiration gave birth to a new possibility.

“...That's right; this is not the only way. I was too focused on piloting and wasted too much time. I should be spending my efforts in the right place...”

Tina tilted her head in confusion as she watched Eru slowly raise his head with resolve.

“I can just make one myself.”

“Make what?”

Chid asked in reflex when he heard Eru's fragmented words.

"A Silhouette Knight. I will make one myself."

"...Ah?"

"...E...Eru? Are you serious?"

Eru looked more determined than ever. His words were too surprising; everyone in the room didn't know what to say.

"Wait...Wait a minute, what do you mean...by making?"

"I mean literally. All my actions thus far are based on piloting, but now that I think about it, I won't get my personal machine this way."

Everyone was stunned, was Eru thinking of hogging a Silhouette Knight for himself? Aside from a handful of powerful nobles and merchants, no one owned a personal Silhouette Knight. Creating and maintaining one would require enormous funds and manpower, going the pilot route was a shortcut compared to this. But that was the common sense of this world, but for the robot otaku from an alternate world, Eru didn't care about all that.

"That's right, isn't it? The machine issued by the kingdom cannot be modified too drastically! Why didn't I think about something so basic? A custom Silhouette Knight is the way to go. I will need related knowledge to modify one completely anyway... I overlooked this."

Chid and Ady put their hands on their foreheads when they saw Eru's evil smile, they knew that this was bad. The normal Eru always acted maturely with a casual air. But he had an unbelievably passionate side to him too, erupting unexpectedly. Chid and Ady felt that they were looking at Eru's true obsessive nature.

"You're doing it for real? Eru..."

"Yes! I am sure that I will be wasting my time if I carry on this way. Setting the goal of building one myself will be a good hobby and is more practical than saving money and buying one right?"

Chid thought either choice would be crazy, but he chose silence intelligently. Mathias glanced at the uninterested Chid and said sternly:

“Eru... I understand how you feel, but it is not as simple as you think.”

“I know, Father. But if possible, I want a personal Silhouette Knight, so I am going to do all that I can.”

“I see...alright then. But work hard on your knight lessons, too.”

“I will. I really want to be a pilot, so I won’t take it lightly.”

Eru had no hesitation on his face. Ady started patting Eru’s head for some reason, moving from being stunned to being impressed.

“Well, you are really willing to do whatever it takes for your goal.”

“...I am a bit concerned with the way you put it, but there is no reason to give up when there are options for me to take.”

“Amazing. Eru looks so cute but is so passionate.”

‘Because of how I look, normal methods won’t work on me.’

Eru looked out the window; he could see the facility that took up half the space in the city... Laihiala Pilot Academy.

“Well... I am looking forward to the day I go to school in Laihiala.”

Mathias and Tina smiled at each other; they didn’t want to see their son depressed. Even though his goal was ridiculous, if it was Eru, he could definitely strive towards it wholeheartedly.

“...I don’t want to lose, Eru is too amazing.”

“Chid?”

“Noth...Nothing. Okay, let’s work hard to be knights!”

“Yeah!”

Chid and Ady had decided to major in knighthood, too. The three of them wanted to work hard on their goal together at Laihiala Pilot Academy and looked forward to their campus life in the future.



—C.E. 1274

The season changed to spring, the time for Laihiala Pilot Academy to welcome new students.

Laihiala Pilot Academy didn’t only take in students from Laihiala City but also from the capital, the neighboring city and all over the nation. Taking into account the possibility of a demon beast attack and traffic conditions, most of the students left for the academy city early, so new faces could be seen around the dormitory in recent days.

On the morning of the entrance ceremony, Ernesti, Archid and Adeltrud walked to campus along with Batson. With the dormitory filled with students from foreign countries, local students usually commuted to school from home.

Laihiala Academy City was surrounded by a giant city wall,

but Laihiala Pilot Academy had a wall of its own. Although its purpose was to demarcate the campus grounds, with the vast amount of land that made up the academy, the continuous line of walls extended to the streets, becoming a well-known landmark.

“Now that I think about it, I have gotten used to the wall but have never gone in...”

“You can go in as much as you like from now on.”

“That’s right.”

The group walked along the wall and reached the tall school gate shortly. This was the main entrance into the academy. Because the piloting students would ride on Silhouette Knights, the gate was adjusted to accommodate their height. The door was wide open for the entrance ceremony.

The four of them were about to enter excitedly when Eru suddenly stopped. Chid, Ady, and Batson looked back with surprise, but understood when they saw the things beside the gate. On either side of the main gate were Silhouette Knights, welcoming all of the visitors and incoming students. The group had to drag Eru, who looked like he was about to prostrate himself before them, away and entered the academy.

The most important part of the schedule was the entrance ceremony. The ceremony mostly consisted of listening to speeches given by the teachers. After lunch, the teachers would lead their students away and give them a brief introduction to the content of the course. Although they were divided into various faculties, primary school focused more on the basics with common modules across the whole school year. The division was very vague, and the content only started to vary during middle school.

The entrance ceremony was held in the grand hall. The group gazed in awe at the gigantic scale of the campus, but Eru, who had visited his father’s workplace before, knew the way and walked confidently toward the grand hall while the other three desperately chased after him to keep the short Eru in sight.

“It’s great that we don’t need others to lead us, but it is easy

to lose track of Eru. He is really small.”

“Right, it would be easier to locate him if he was taller, but that’s fine. He is cuter this way!”

“I didn’t grow much either.”

Eru couldn’t stand their noise and spoke up.

“I’m going to leave Chid and Ady behind.”

“Ah, I have an idea! We won’t lose Eru if I hug him right?”

“I’m not okay with that.”

As the group joked around, the grand hall was already overflowing with people when they arrived. Everyone here was a new student, as expected of the largest education institute in the nation. They thought it would be too crowded to even stand in the grand hall, but they somehow found some space. The school had already anticipated this overwhelming crowd.

The ceremony began in the grand hall filled with tense first years.

Grandfather of Ernesti—Dean Lauri Echevarria—started off the address, followed by esteemed members of the academy. The four children that listened to the speech with their backs straight started to feel irritated as the event droned on. Although they displayed patience uncommon for children, they still had bored faces by the end of the ceremony. Fortunately, the torment stopped before noon. With the end of the speeches, the entrance ceremony drew to a close and the first years filed out of the grand hall.

It was lunch time, so the group headed for the school canteen. Some people bought food there; others took out their lunch boxes. Upperclassmen who were familiar with the place headed to the eateries outside of the campus. Everyone settled down to eat their lunches in their own way, but the cafeteria remained crowded. In this chaos, a prominent group sat in a corner of the canteen.

One of them was a pretty girl who had short silvery hair with

a hint of purple.

The other two had unkempt black hair and wavy shoulder-length black hair, a boy and girl who shared a similar feeling.

The last was a young Dwarf who had reddish brown hair.

From afar, the members of this group had nothing in common. Even though the group drew many curious glances, no one had the courage to approach them.

“The canteen is incredibly crowded.”

“But we found a place to sit immediately, which is great.”

“They offered their seats to us immediately... I wonder why?”

Eru chatted with Batson as he ate his crepe covered in pie crust. It was a mini crepe in pie crust that was easy to carry and fit nicely into Eru’s small hand. Ady looked very pleased as she watched Eru eat the biscuit in silence.

“Are there speeches in the afternoon? They are too long-winded.”

“Doesn’t matter, you don’t listen to them anyway Chid. Didn’t you fall asleep?”

“Let’s eat our lunch first. There are lots of people here, so we should finish up and let others sit too.”

There were empty seats at their table. Eru felt embarrassed that no one else was sitting with them. At this moment, a female student ignored all of that and walked toward them.

Her blonde hair swayed as she walked in confident strides, causing a small commotion among the students. It was rare for her to show up here after all. She sat in the empty chair as if they were planning to meet up.

She was obviously older than Eru and the others, an

upperclassman. There was no standard uniform in Laihiala Pilot Academy. Her clothes seemed to be low profile but well made, with accessories that didn't hinder her movements. Eru guessed she had to come from a well-off family, either a daughter of wealthy merchants or aristocrats.

There were two types of reactions from them: Eru and Batson looked at the stranger with confusion, while Chid and Ady held their breaths and stared at her. Those were not passionate eyes for a beautiful lady, but bashful eyes. Eru didn't understand this, but he was certain the girl had connections with the twins.

The pretty girl who came uninvited smiled as she looked at the tense twins, then faced Eru and Batson. Her smile became gentler as she introduced herself.

"Hello my cute friend. My name is Stefania Serrati. What about you?"

Eru was lost for a moment, but he put down his half bitten biscuit, sat properly and replied:

"I am Ernesti Echevarria, this is Batson Termonen, as for these two..."

"It's fine, I'm already acquainted with them. Archid, Adeltrud, long time no see, I'm glad you are both healthy."

Stefania had been smiling gently the entire time, but Chid tensed his normally sleepy face and said:

"Long time no see, Stefania-oneesama."

The stiff tone didn't sound like something Chid would normally use. Stefania's face collapsed, but she regained her smile immediately.

"...Both of you are at the age to be schooling in Laihiala. Since we have the opportunity to study in the same school, why don't you visit me?"

"Stefania-oneesama is in the third year of primary school

right? Oh yeah, Baltsar-oniisama is studying here too?”

“Right, he is majoring in knighthood, 2nd year of primary school, you will have the chance to meet him soon.”

Compared to Stefania’s attitude, the demeanor of the twins was weird. Chid was stiff in his tone while Ady was uncharacteristically quiet. It seemed like they had family ties, but it felt unnatural. Batson routinely switched his gaze from one member to the next in this awkward atmosphere. Everyone had stopped eating. Suddenly, Eru finished his biscuit aggressively, contrary to his small stature. He ignored the surprised stares of others, wiped his mouth and smiled.

“Alright, we have finished our food. The cafeteria is too cramped, and it’s not considerate to hog the table, let’s go somewhere else. What do you think?”

“...Ri...Right. Both of you are majoring in knighthood? There will be plenty of chances for us to meet, let’s chat slowly next time.”

Stefania, who had a regrettable expression, patted Eru’s head for some reason before leaving. The four baffled children were left behind. Batson wanted to clarify things, but Eru said that lunch break was over and that they should head for the classroom. He forcefully left his seat and left. Batson wasn’t satisfied, but he still went toward the engineering department, while the trio moved toward the knighthood department in an awkward atmosphere.

There was nothing worth mentioning about the afternoon first year-welcoming activities. They were simply briefed on the schedule for the future and the contents for lessons tomorrow. After orientation, everyone was dismissed and the students prepared to leave.

Even now, Chid and Ady still seemed troubled. They were not joking like usual, instead they were unfocused and had an awkward air about them. On the way home, Eru led the way and told them:

“I don’t know the details, but don’t be depressed. Class is starting tomorrow, so training is canceled for today, take a break.”

Chid and Ady stopped. “Eh, Eru.” Chid called out with a calm resolve.

“What is it?”

“Aren’t you going to ask, erm, about her?”

“If you feel the need to share, I will listen.”

The air about the twins visibly eased. They looked at each other as if to confirm something. After a while, Chid started:

“Eru, we have something to tell you.”

“Alright, let’s go to my room.”

And so, the trio left campus and headed for Eru’s place to his room. As this was the place where they held their magic lessons, the two were familiar with it. They sat on the table and bed as usual, but the difference was that they were keeping quiet. After waiting for a while, Chid began:

“Ah... Erm, simply put, our father is an impressive noble.”

After being silent for so long, these words were too direct. Eru blinked and asked:

“So you are aristocrats? But you two have not done anything noble-like? And even joined me for training.”

“It’s complicated...actually not. Our mother is not the noble’s wife but a mistress.”

“Eh, because Mother is laid-back, she says she don’t mind being a mistress since she has us.”

“Father’s wife...well, is very jealous and conscious of others.”

“Even if she doesn’t like Mother, her pride prevents her from feuding with a simple mistress.”

Even Eru wasn't sure how to react, so he simply nodded.

“Mother is too obedient, doing everything to appease others. In the end Oujo-sama didn't allow us to live under the same roof as her, making a big scene.”

“And we were given a place to live, that's why we moved here. The living expenses are handled by Father.”

“Eh, that's how it is... Stefania-oneesama you met earlier is the daughter of Oujo-sama.”

“Tiffa-nee is alright, but the problem is with the other two brothers. The younger brother is very irritating.”

“He likes to go on a power trip, bullying us because we are scions of a mistress. Just like Oujo-sama.”

The two of them complained nonstop and ended with a big sigh. Their expressions twisted when they mentioned the brothers, making it easy to imagine all of the things that happened between them.

“This brother you mentioned is in Laihiala?”

“Correct. He is one year older than us, so he is in the second year of primary school.”

“I see. I have a feeling that there will be trouble.”

Chid nodded strongly. It was not a premonition; Chid knew that trouble would definitely come. The life in the main house flashed in his mind. He had to bear with oppression and hardship back then, so he didn't spend too much time reminiscing.

“We are still grateful to Father for providing funding for us. But...”

“If they leave us alone, we won't trouble them either. But they like to mess with us and can't stand us.”

They probably recalled unpleasant memories, Chid was gesturing furiously while Ady said moodily.

“Since Tiffa-nee knows... That guy will probably come soon. If you are with us, you might get caught up in this too...”

Ady was depressed when she said this. Her usual confidence had disappeared. Because she usually gave off a bubbly impression, the gap appeared wider.

“I understand the gist of it. So what’s next?”

Eru was standing before they had realized it.

“...What do you...mean by next?”

“Do you plan to defend, ignore them or attack?”

“Oh, should be attack... Hey!”

Chid unconsciously went along and was shocked. Eru smiled as he usually did when he was talking about dangerous things. Even Chid who knew that Eru was not just a pretty face backed off.

“What is with you all of a sudden? I am glad you are my friend, you would be terrifying as an enemy.”

“You are helping us? As expected of Eru! You are so reliable, but this is our family problem. We can’t trouble you.”

“That’s right. I have no idea how much I can interfere, but I don’t plan to see my friends so troubled. Just call me whenever you need, I will be there.”

“...Okay, we’re counting on you!”

Chid and Ady nodded strongly, they were smiling once again. Eru looked at them and thought:

‘I didn’t expect them to be nobles. Their sister didn’t seem to hate them...why is that? No matter what, it seems there will be trouble...’

Eru thought about it from an outsider's point of view, keeping this matter to heart. The upcoming school days would be more chaotic than he imagined.



After the tumultuous entrance ceremony, they started their school life the next day.

There were no scheduled lessons today either because the briefing took up half the day. This was extremely boring for the 9-year-old kids that just enrolled. Most people paid no heed to the teacher's presentation, and the atmosphere was clearly screaming 'won't it end already' for all to see. But one student was excited about a few trivial details.

'There... There is such a course...'

Indeed, it was Ernesti Echevarria. And the matter that gave him such a big impact? It was the flimsy piece of paper in his hands. A table was drawn neatly on it, the timetable for all classes, probably basic information given out by the school to all first years. What did he learn from the timetable?

'...There is a... 'Silhouette Knight Design Basics' course...!' But the timetable he was holding with his trembling hands did not belong to the knighthood major for primary school. You could infer from the name that this course was meant for Knightsmith students who were aiming to build and maintain Silhouette Knights. It was catered for students in their 2nd year of middle school (around 13 years old), and this course had nothing to do with Eru who was majoring in knighthood.

But after reading such tempting words, the out of control speeding train—Ernesti—would definitely go for it. He confirmed the knighthood department timetable, and in the same time slot was one of the most important courses for knighthood majors—Fundamental Magic.

‘I must attend this course no matter what...this class is in the way...!’

Suddenly, the teacher at the lectern felt a strange sensation, as if a starving beast had made its way into the classroom, sending a prickling sensation down his back. He shivered, stopped his lecture and looked around the room, but he could only see a bunch of unmotivated kids, there was no famished beast here. The teacher shook his head and decided to treat it as a false alarm.

He overlooked the fired-up petite student hidden in the crowd.

The knighthood courses that they were studying had two types of courses, fundamental knight courses and generic courses. The generic courses were the same as other majors, while the knight courses focused on magic knowledge, mana training and swordsmanship.

Generally speaking, human magic was classified into elementary, intermediate and advanced according to its power and ease of control.

As most citizens knew elementary magic, they were also known as ‘common spells’. Hence, mid- and high-level spells were recognized as real magic. The departments aside from knighthood majors strove to be at the intermediate level. Since advanced magic was also dependent on the depth of one’s mana pool, only knighthood majors learned it. Ernesti knew through experience that increasing your mana pool required plenty of effort. Hence, joining combat-related careers such as knights required lots of effort in mana training. Allocating more time on mana training than other courses was the unique feature of the knighthood department.

And so, the day to attend the Fundamental Magic class arrived.

This was a memorable first lesson. The lesson was not conducted in the classroom as the students needed to be tested to determine their magical abilities and divided into different groups.

Eru's trio had already learned magic before enrollment, so their foundations were strong. Apart from them, there were some who had learned the basics too, so they would be in a different class from those without any magical training. The newbies were placed in the 'general class' while the experienced ones went to 'advanced class'. The advanced class might sound impressive, but the only difference with the general class was the experience. Regardless, advanced class students were viewed as elites anyway.

This was because the advanced class had kids from noble clans and merchant families, able to receive education in sword and magic before enrollment. This meant they had a certain standard of wealth. In a way, Ernesti, with his family background in the education field, and his disciples, Archid and Adeltrud, were exceptions.

The chattering express students followed the teacher to the sports arena. The fastest method to test magic capabilities was for the students to use them, and to cast destructive spells, they needed to move to a specialized training ground surrounded by walls. The classmates gathered in groups of 2 or 3, surveying the straw men targets wearing old armor, rearing to go.

On the surface, this was just an introductory class. They wouldn't be scrutinized because of their magic abilities at this stage, but it was a chance to show off and garner fame if they performed better than their peers. A lot of the advanced class students had confidence in their abilities. Everyone was in high spirits and did their best because of this.

One of the students cast a Fireball⁴, an intermediate-level fire spell. An orange magical sphere appeared from the staff, hitting the target with blazes trailing behind it. True to its name, the magic exploded in a ball of flames upon impact. The armor retained its shape but was scorched black, showing the explosive power of the blast. The students were in an uproar after witnessing this scene, very few first year knew intermediate spells before starting school and had mastery over the powerful Fireball. But Fireball was an impressive spell and drained lots of mana, the boy was already at

his limits after casting it. He was panting unevenly, almost to the point of mana exhaustion, but he still looked very pleased.

The teacher supervising the exercise held high hopes for this batch. With such mastery of magic upon enrollment, he would become an elite magician if he put in the effort in school. The teacher tried not to display this thought on his face, continuing to record the results in silence.

“Everyone seems used to Fireball, should we do something like that too?”

“Right... Ah, Eru, what do you want to do?”

Archid folded his arms lazily, standing some distance from the area that was filled with excitement. Adeltrud hugged Eru as usual as she conversed with him. She realized Eru was not being himself. Eru always gave off a gentle air, now he had a stern expression as if he was going to a battlefield. Ady tilted her head in confusion, her past experience told her that Eru would only make such a serious face when Silhouette Knights were involved, but she had no idea how that was related to the magic test that is going on right now.

The test continued. Next up was finally Eru. His stature was petite when compared to his classmates, but his expression was stern like never before and he had a serious atmosphere about him. Eru spoke when he got into position.

“Teacher, I have a selfish request.”

“Hmm? What is it?”

The sudden question surprised the teacher.

“If the result of the test exceeds the contents of the class by a large margin, can I be exempted from this course?”

“...What are you talking about?”

Eru’s strange words stunned the teacher. He frowned deeply when he realized what Eru meant.

“...Ernesti Echevarria? What do you mean? Refusing to attend lessons? This joke is not funny...”

“No, I am very serious. I have another class that I wish to attend, so it will be a big help if I am exempt from this course.”

The teacher was dumbstruck. He had been a teacher for quite some time, but he had never seen a student so overconfident before. It might be okay for a middle schooler, but a first year in primary school? The teacher wouldn't allow this request easily.

“How daring of you, I won't accept it so easily. Ah, right, since you said that, at least show me advanced magic. Then I will think about it.”

“So it will be dependent on my results? I heard that very clearly...”

The students around them listened to the conversation and anticipated a good show. Most of them just wanted to watch the drama, only Chid and Ady knew Eru's strength and the inevitable result and looked at each other.

The teacher was also hinting that punishment would follow if Eru failed and deliberately made things difficult for Eru. But the teacher did not realize that he was facing a demon who wanted to give his whole life to Silhouette Knight design; Eru would give his all without hesitation.

Eru started to construct the magical script in the virtual region in his brain—the magius circuit. He pushed his amazing calculation abilities, starting his processing sequence. He drew out the Winchester from his waist, casting spells along the wake of his staff—Piercing Lance. This was a type of compressed fire spell, focusing the explosion on impact in one direction, increasing the piercing power of Fireball. And he did not activate just one, there were ten Piercing Lances appearing one after another in the air.

After completing the deployment of the Piercing Lances in short order, he took aim at the target, firing them off simultaneously. The long and thin flaming spears were right on target, the armored target was hit repeatedly. The narrow interior

of the armor was heated intensely after being pierced on impact, the straw man instantly torn apart. The armor could not withstand the devastation and melted in a red glow before finally exploding.

The teacher and students were speechless, unable to believe their eyes. Piercing Lance was an intermediate spell but was higher level than Fireball. Constructing the script in such a short time and activating 10 of them was not a simple task. And amazingly, Eru didn't seem fatigued after casting such a powerful spell. This meant that the mana cost of the Piercing Lances were not a burden for Eru's mana pool. This was not something a first year who just enrolled yesterday should be able to achieve.

This was more than enough, but Eru kept his word. He lifted his other Winchester—different from the one he used to cast Piercing Lance. The next script had been completed in his mind, a complicated and orderly spell, conjuring a magic much stronger than Piercing Lance.

The air around them started to shift, forming a tornado in an instant. It went straight for the target from Eru's position with a large howl. The strong wind would definitely have blown the straw men away if they hadn't been nailed to the ground. The furious wind and rumbles of thunder resonated within everyone's ears. The lightning created by magic was much more destructive than the Piercing Lances, turning the armor into dust with one strike.

Thundering Gale—A melded magic using wind and lightning sigils, a real Advanced Spell.

Eru started training from age 5, so casting this series of spells, including high-level spells, was not a burden for him, he was not even out of breath. When he looked back, he saw a startled expression. The teacher was slack-jawed and stiff. Eru smiled happily and said to the teacher:

“How was that Teacher? Do you agree to exempt me from this class?”

“...Eh? Ah, yes, do what you want.”

No one protested or challenged this decision. And so, Eru

earned the freedom to work toward a bright future.

Everyone stared from afar at the pleased Eru who gained victory with his overwhelming abilities. Even Chid and Ady looked at the target that was blown away with blank eyes.

“He made such a big scene, he was totally into it.”

“Yeah, he can skip this class and attend the Silhouette design module of his dreams!”

“He was willing to go this far... Anyone who gets in his way will be burnt to ashes...”

Ady said as she backed away. Chid pulled her back with a bitter smile.

“That’s wrong. He is not taking it easy because he has a goal, right? I will blow the target away too.”

Chid rotated his shoulders gleefully and with anticipation. Eru gave him a warning despite what he did:

“Don’t mind me, but is it okay for you to stand out? You have an irritating brother here right? Do you plan to challenge him?”

“What are you saying after causing such a stir? Like I said, we will stand out with you around anyway.”

“I think...you are spot on, I can’t deny that.”

“Right? I will be right back.”

“Take care... Work hard!”

The training ground hadn’t recovered yet from the disaster caused by Eru, everyone looked at Chid with sympathetic eyes when he stepped onto the field without a care in the world. No one wanted to be next, right after Eru’s unbelievable magic display. Chid knew this, but still entered with his head held high.

‘My tutor is amazing. It will be hard to catch up to him. I have to put on a good show too!’

For Chid who studied under Eru, he was used to Eru’s shenanigans and knew he couldn’t match Eru yet. That was why he couldn’t hold back anything.

Chid steadied himself, closed his eyes and started to construct a script with his magius circuit. To be honest, he was more proficient in power-type spells, so he chose to use one. He drew up the staff he favored and held it high, then pointed it at the target. The mana and script streaming into the crystal catalyst made the red orb glow brightly. He chose to cast a single-shot spell, a mid-level spell more powerful than Piercing Lance—Flame Strike.

An oval-shaped magic sphere flew out with a spectacular trailing blaze, causing a bigger explosion than Fireball. The reverberating sound acted like a signal, drawing the attention of everyone present back to the arena.

“...Wahhh!”

Chid fired a second shot, the two overlapping explosions blew the targets away. For him, two shots were the limit of his mana pool. He was unsteady on his feet from fatigue, but he still smiled and passed the baton to the next person—Ady.

“You are still the same, only going for brute force... My turn!”

Chid and Ady were twins, but their strengths differed widely. Unlike Chid who was good in power, Ady specialized in intrinsic control. She carefully constructed her script, held her magic staff with both hands and aimed at the target. Dazzling lightning appeared the next second, piercing the target with the rumble of thunder. She chose the mid-level spell of the lightning architect sigil—Riot Sparrow⁵.

As depicted with its name, Riot Sparrow changed lightning into the form of a javelin before firing it at the target. Lightning spells were powerful, but it was hard for the caster to direct it accurately. Increasing the accuracy added additional burden on the caster, along with its difficult control making people view it as a

higher class of magic compared to others. From the aftermath, the trio displayed incredible capability.

They ignored the atmosphere in the arena, high-fiving each other in celebration. Ady hugged Eru and twirled around while Chid was so tired he couldn't stand up straight. Compared to the casual trio, the other advanced students felt uneasy. They were thinking:

‘What are we going to do if we take classes with these three incredible people?’

As previously mentioned, the express class had many scions of aristocrats and merchants, a bunch of children with large amounts of pride. Their childishness and immature pride angered others easily, but the scene before them was too amazing, shattering their young pride and competitiveness. They gave up and sighed deeply. Eru and the twins didn't care about their depressed schoolmates. Their schoolmates' troubles were just beginning.

That Fundamental Magic class was seen as a catastrophe. A few days later, Batson led his petite childhood friend and repeated for the one hundredth and first time.

“Ah...it's that way, that's the classroom you want... But, are you really going to study there?”

Laihiala Pilot Academy had many grades and departments, so it needed plenty of classrooms and facilities. Because the campus was divided by grades and faculty, a lot of students would only meet others in the canteen during breaks.

“Of course, how can I miss such an interesting class? Ah, here will be far enough, Batson.”

“Yeah...”

Batson watched the youth enter the classroom and remained baffled.

“But this is the engineering department, and that is a middle school classroom...”

The atmosphere before class began was casual, some were preparing for the next lesson, some were working on their assignments and others were just chatting lazily.

“Quiet please, class is beginning... It seems very quiet today.”

The teacher said the usual when he entered the room, but he noticed that something was wrong and stopped. The students were usually noisy and rowdy before class started. To be engineers required a practical attitude. In other words, it was better to try it out instead of thinking about it. There was nothing wrong with this line of thought, but that meant a lot of them just couldn't sit still.

For these students, this lecture-based class was unpopular. It was rare for his charges to be quiet before the teacher entered. He might have felt moved, but instead he felt that something was out of place. The 40-something-year-old teacher surveyed the students in the room and noticed that they were staring at the same spot. He followed their lines of sight and saw the culprit for this abnormal situation.

“...What are you doing here?”

The teacher asked the student sitting in the middle of the front row who did not belong here.

This was a young and small-sized boy, nothing like a middle schooler. Because the middle school desk was too large for him, he had to kneel on his chair. His position was upright and proper, with the textbook ‘Fundamentals of Silhouette Knight Design’ on his lap, waiting excitedly for the class to begin.

This scene was warming but contrasted with the situation in reality. This was a classroom in middle school, not a place for primary school students.

“I'm here for the lesson.”

“I see, because the class is about to begin. But that's not what I meant. You don't look like a middle schooler.”

“I am a primary school student from the knighthood

department. I came because I want to attend this course.”

Their conversation was going in circles, but the teacher was steady in his behavior, warning Eru calmly.

“Well, it is good to be passionate about your studies, but there are classes for knighthood majors right? You should come after finishing that class.”

“It’s okay. I knew all the contents of that class. The teachers are fine with exempting me. You can confirm this with them.”

“...Is that so? Then it’s fine. Alright, let’s continue with the topic from the previous lesson, regarding the structure of Silhouette Knights...”

All the students retorted in their hearts: *‘How is that fine!’*, but the teacher decided that he would lose if he felt bothered by Eru and carried on teaching adamantly.

The outsider who hogged the first row, Ernesti Echevarria, glanced at the teacher and opened the textbook happily, preparing to take notes. Being so pleased because of a lesson, the middle schoolers felt too lazy to retort. And so, the engineering department accepted this outsider and the course somehow carried on smoothly.

Before dabbling in the design of Silhouette Knights, you had to familiarize yourself with the structure, this was a simple rationale. But what needed to be done specifically? That was hard to answer. One of the reasons was the difficulty in constructing the Silhouette Knights. It required engineering, magic and alchemy, so there was a lot to learn, meaning it was a problem of the amount of studying materials. That was why only people who were going to make Silhouette Knights, Knightsmiths, would learn how to design them. Knight Runners wouldn’t have the time to learn all of this knowledge.

This might be true, but you couldn’t apply this to the boy intruding into the engineering department—Ernesti. He was a robot otaku whose obsession wasn’t even cured after reincarnation. He read volumes of robot designs and specification, even memorizing

the name and models of robots. If you taught the methods of building a giant robot to this guy, what would happen? He would treat the textbook as a bible and study it religiously, preparing for lessons and revising the topic until perfection, going beyond the scope of the lesson and researching tons of information. His attitude was great, but his burning passion made the middle schoolers older than him back away.

“...Comparing the current military model Karrdator and the previous generation Salodrea...”

As Eru listened to the teacher’s explanation, he flipped his textbook. He always sat in the middle of the first row, and after a few lessons, that became his permanent seat.

The elderly teacher scribbled on the black board with the clear sound of chalk, listing the basic structure of the Silhouette Knights. This included the five main crucial elements... The ‘magius engine’ acting as the brain, the ‘ether reactor’ that served as the heart, the ‘crystal tissue’ simulating the muscles, the ‘inner skeleton’ reinforcing the structure and the ‘outer skin’ as the armor.

“As everyone knows, these two models have similar ether reactors; the difference in power output lies in the crystal tissues...”

The Silhouette Knights were powered by the mana produced from the ether reactor. The ether reactor converted the ether in the world into mana, simulating the organic functions of living things in the form of machinery. As long as there was ether around it, this device could keep on running. Normally, the mana produced by the reactor would turn back to ether and spread into the atmosphere. Hence, there was a need for ether to circulate within the crystal tissues to maintain its form as mana.

Crystal tissues were crystal catalysts that had been modified through alchemy, able to change their shape under the influence of specific scripts and mana. Apart from using them as the muscles of Silhouette Knights, this property also allowed them to be used as mana batteries.

“The script in the magius engine has been refined, but the improvement is not significant. Because of its ruggedness, it has been used for over 300 years without major changes...”

The magius engine was responsible for controlling the heart and muscles. It contained gigantic and complicated magic scripts, allowing the pilot to control the Silhouette Knights.

The inner skeleton and outer skin were simply a metallic frame and armor. But current technology could not create the skeletons of the gigantic humanoid robots as a single part. They had to be made from the combination of smaller parts, welded together with physical boost magic and scripts to support the body weight. This allowed the Silhouette to look tougher in defense, but created a flaw of the body being unable to support its own weight without a constant flow of magic.

Silhouette Knights simulated the functions of living beings, an existence created by the combined efforts of engineering, magic and alchemy.

“Please turn to the next page. This covers the Silhouette Arms of the Silhouette Knights. Although it is not directly related to design, this is still important, so please study this carefully.”

Silhouette Arms referred to the ranged attack equipment used by Silhouette Knights. Surprisingly, the Silhouette Knights, which were a combination of magical parts, were not able to use ranged magic on their own. The magius engine could only be used to move the Silhouette Knight itself and did not include a ranged attack function. The Knight Runner was required to construct a magic script when spells were needed.

Of course, casting magic at the level of Silhouette Knights—known as Overt spells—was impossible for humans. There were rare cases where an individual was able to process the magic, but constructing the script needed time and could not be used in actual battle. For Silhouette Knights to use overt spells in the heat of a fight, the magic script had to be prepared in advance.

“For people aiming to be Knightsmiths such as yourselves, there is no need to study ‘Emblem Graph’, but you must master the script at the level of Culverin.”

Emblem graphs didn’t construct magic through the use of scripts like the magius circuit of living beings. Emblems were drawn on the exterior of objects, which were then used to cast spells... It

used the theory that scripts could be visualized in the form of a pattern. When using emblem grafts to cast magic, the mana could be channeled directly to the object the emblem was grafted on in order to activate it. It appeared to be a convenient technique so far, but because drawing the script needed a large physical area, it would run into the problem of the equipment being too unwieldy. If you took into account the difficulty and effort in making them, the emblems were not really marketable to citizens.

But the advantage of using emblem grafts was the ability to prepare any spell as long as there was enough space. You just needed to provide the power and the spells could be used without much control. Simply put, this technique was suitable for the gigantic Silhouette Knight which was made from the combination of magical parts; the only disadvantage was that each emblem could only use one spell. That was why the army created a variety of Silhouette Arms in order to deal with different situations. It was common to see a Silhouette Knight going into battle with a wide arsenal on its back.

A bell in the distance rang when the class reached this point, announcing the end of the lesson.

“Ara, time is up so I will stop here. Remember to revise today’s content... Ernesti, please ‘have mercy’ on us.”

Ernesti watched the teacher leave after uttering these words, he was uncertain of what he did wrong. He took plenty of notes today as well. By the way, his progress already exceeded normal students by months.

After finishing classes for the day, Ernesti returned home and took out his books to revise the content of the day’s lesson. Although he met up with Chid and Ady for training occasionally, he preferred to head home and review whenever there were Silhouette Knight design classes.

Eru learned a lot from the class. Thanks to that, he gradually grasped the basics of Silhouette Knight designing. But the more he understood, the more questions he had for the parts beyond the basics. In the construction of Silhouette Knights, the crucial elements, such as crystal tissues, inner skeleton and outer skin, were subjected to lots of wear and tear. Because of this, the country

invested heavily in the education of engineers and alchemists. This ensured that forts on the front lines and towns with appropriate facilities could supply the Silhouette Knights with necessary parts. A lot of engineering department students apart from Eru had actual experience in engineering. But the details about the magius engine and the ether reactor...the heart and soul of Silhouette Knights were classified. The lesson covered their functions, but their interior structure remained a mystery.

Silhouette Knights were a major military force for the nation and a problematic property for normal citizens to possess. Its distribution was controlled by the government and the construction methods of the core parts were national secrets. Even the 'Kingdom of Knights', Fremmevira, waws strict about this. Withholding the engineering methods led to a drop in production efficiency, so it could not be mass produced, making the value of each Silhouette Knight sky rocket. Silhouette Knights were treated as expensive tactical weapons because of this.

“...That might be the case, but I am not worried about the magius engine.”

It was already known that the magius engine was used to control the movement of the whole robot. That meant similar scripts could emulate this. Simply put, Eru intended to hack into the magius engine. It was an idea Eru had come up with because of his incredible processing ability and background in software engineering. But he couldn't do anything when it involved something that was not dependent on theory, emulating the fundamentals of magic in this world, the heart of magic technology—the ether reactor.

“But...without more clues, I will come to a bottleneck... After all, ‘that world’ doesn't have the concept of ether.”

Uguu, Eru frowned and rolled around in bed.

He understood one thing from class; the ether reactor was made from a special mineral called 'Fairy Stone'. But the mining and usage methods were unknown, all information regarding fairy stones was kept secret. Although Eru's goal was to build his own Silhouette Knight, the worst case scenario was to buy an ether reactor. But even so, the price of ether reactors made that plan

impractical.

“Eh, no use worrying over it. Let’s start researching from what I already know.”

Eru mumbled and returned to his desk. The notes he took did not have any blank spaces, so he took out another self-study notebook. He dipped his pen in ink and immersed himself in preparation, in revision, a time to research his hobby. Eru lived an incredibly busy life, but it was a blissful life according to him.



Eru’s student life traversing between the knighthood and engineering department continued for some time.

In the beginning, others were irritated by Eru’s unprecedented actions, but they became used to them with the passage of time. Everyone started to notice his cute features that Eru had inherited from his mother. The short Eru who happily listened to the fundamentals of Silhouette Knight design was treated like a mascot, and Eru had gotten used to being patted on the head as a greeting. And one day...

“Ara, you are...”

Eru finished his engineering classes and was on the way back to the knighthood department when he heard a familiar voice. He looked back and saw a lady with wavy blonde hair, a nice pair of eye brows and slightly drooping blue eyes that were squinting because of a smile.

“You are Ernesti...right?”

Archid and Adeltrud’s sister.—Stefania Serrati—said as she walked to his side, bending down with a smile to accommodate Eru’s height. Eru replied politely making her even happier.

“Ara, I remember, you are the same grade as Archid right? Why are you here?”

Even though she looked joyful, she still asked. This was the secondary school campus, not a place where a primary school student like Eru should be visiting. When she heard Eru’s honest reply that he was attending a middle school engineering course, her eyes opened wide from shock.

“Eh, you are really smart, but why are you rushing to learn this?”

In a way, this was an obvious question. A student would be hard pressed handling the work at their grade level. In the long history of Laihiala Pilot Academy, there were very few such independent students. Eru’s answer was very simple and to the point.

“Because I’m interested.”

“Interest...? Even though it’s school work? Hmm... I see, you are a bit special.”

Because there was another class, the two chatted as they walked. Eru’s actions were unpredictable. Stefania was surprised sometimes, patted his head sometimes and was always smiling in a great mood.

As class had just ended, there were lots of commuting students in the corridor, but they were shocked by the sight of the blonde girl and silver-haired boy, giving way to them. Thanks to this, their journey proceeded smoothly, reaching the first year campus of primary school in no time. Stefania was in the 3rd year of primary school and needed to go to another campus. As she was leaving Eru reluctantly...

“Ah, Eru...found!”

Someone ran over at a high speed, it was Adeltrud who had seen Eru by coincidence. The petite Eru was easily hidden when in a crowd, but with everyone avoiding him, he was readily discovered. Adeltrud looked gleeful when she was coming over but stopped when she saw her sister beside Eru.

“Ah, Onee...Onee-sama.”

“Ara, Adeltrud.”

Ady alternated her eyes between the two and seemed to be questioning Eru about what was going on with them. Eru didn't give a direct answer and smiled awkwardly. Stefania smiled gently as she approached Ady. From their previous encounter, Ady seemed to be bad at dealing with her sister from a different mother, but Stefania didn't seem to be bothered.

“Don't be so guarded, I won't bully you.”

“Yes...”

Seeing Ady act so hesitant despite answering obediently, the two of them smiled bitterly.

“But why is Eru together with Onee-sama?”

“Ara, it's simple...because I like smart, cute kids!”

Stefania placed her hands on her hips and declared confidently. What a forceful way of putting it. Ady looked like she was frozen on the spot, convinced by Stefania. As expected of sisters, Eru thought.

“I've had my eyes on him since the last time we met, and he is the center of some 'topics'. We chatted just now, and I discovered that this child is both smart and cute!”

Stefania became more excited as she spoke, finally giving in and hugging Eru.

“Nah, Eru wants to be a knight right? How about this? Want to protect Onee-chan as my knight? I can welcome you with 3 meals a day and sleeping together.”

“Wait...Wait, no! Eru is my soft toy!”

‘What is with this family, scary. And Ady-san, what do you mean by soft toy?’

The stiff Ady who was rooted because of the impact of the confession was yelling now, snatching Eru back. She might have been too tense, but even her tone had reverted back to normal. Stefania was smiling coldly. Because she was beautiful, this made her even scarier. Eru saw her close her hands as she said quietly, ‘Ara, so that’s how it is~’. Eru decided to pretend he didn’t see anything.

“Ady, your tone is back to normal.”

Ady covered her mouth, her face seemed to be saying ‘this is bad’. Stefania shook her head immediately. “It’s okay. You don’t need to try so hard at school. I am not like Baltsar who is petty about such things.”

“Since Onee-sama...says that...”

“Before that, Ady? Can you let go?”

“Eh? Ah, sorry. You are just the right size so I hugged you without thinking...”

Eru broke free from Ady while Stefania looked at him longingly.

“Yeah... Eru’s height is just nice for a hug...”

“That’s right Onee-sama, and his hair so soft and smooth...”

“Adeltrud...as expected of my sister!”

“Onee-sama...”

Eru put some distance between the perverted sisters who were holding hands. There were many things he wanted to retort, but Stefania seemed so happy. Maybe she was just joking with Eru as an excuse to be closer to her sister. He decided to think of it that way and hoped it was true.

The sisters ignored Eru who was averting his gaze, and talked about how much they loved cute things. Their discussion was so passionate that you could see a pink aura around them. Eru felt like escaping reality, thinking *‘just do what you girls want’*, and he suddenly remembered an important thing.

“Ah, the next lesson is starting.”

The bell signaling the start of the class rang as if on cue. The three of them rushed to their classrooms in a panic, but unfortunately, they arrived late and were lectured by their teachers.

“Oh, isn’t that Archid? It’s been a while.” Just as Eru and the others were talking noisily, Chid and someone else met by coincidence in another place. This was the number one person that Chid didn’t want to meet—Chid and Ady’s half-brother—Baltsar Serrati, someone who had always picked on them.

Baltsar had normal features on a decent face, but his scowling smile was a minus. Chid frowned reflexively when he saw the irritating face of his brother but managed to keep his composure thanks to training since he was young.

“Long time no see... Baltsar-oniisama.”

“I heard the rumors, although the contents are idiotic... I heard that there is an amazing first year this year eh?”

Baltsar said suddenly. He was probably trying to find faults since he usually ignored what Chid said. Even though Chid hated that attitude, he didn’t complain. Baltsar was taller than Chid and seemed to be happy about something as he looked down on him and continued:

“After asking, didn’t that first year have some familiar companions.”

“Really? I never heard anything about that...”

‘It’s finally here,’ Chid braced himself. Baltsar was more imposing than usual, there was no way the conversation would become cheerful.

“Hey, is that the attitude you show your brother? Are you a brat that didn’t learn manners?”

“...Sorry.”

“Forget it. I am generous and will forgive a brat without manners like you.”

Baltsar squinted his eyes and deepened his smile, a creepy smile like a predator hunting its prey. Chid worked hard in hiding his wariness.

‘The actual topic is coming, how can I get away from this...?’

“I heard you guys weaseled into the advanced class. That trash of a class has grown so much, but, even so, I will praise you honestly. Eh, although you are a bastard child, we are still family after all. It would be shameful if you were not able to do only this much... That’s right, I said ‘only this much’. First year brats shouldn’t know much of anything right? But I heard a rumor that made me concerned. How boring, if it was true...”

Baltsar squinted his eyes further, Chid felt a sense of uneasiness down his spine.

“I heard you guys made quite a scene? Hey, that’s not true, is it?”

Baltsar’s smile vanished without warning as he drew near menacingly; speaking in a low voice so no one can else could hear them:

“Don’t you think you are acting out of line for a mere child of a mistress? Huh? A bastard child? The rumors are probably lies, I don’t know what trickery you used, but wouldn’t it mislead everyone.”

“No, they did not misunderstand. Onii-sama, we...”

“Enough, shut up.”

The smile on Baltsar’s mouth had turned into a frown. Seeing Baltsar getting emotional, Chid was tense and ready for anything. But unexpectedly, Baltsar said without emotion:

“Archid, what are you scheming?”

“What...scheming?”

“Casting mid-level spells easily just after enrollment, planning a route to be a noble knight? Is that the extent of your ambition? Are you planning to bring that title to ‘my house’ as a visiting gift?”

Baltsar asked with his poker face.

“Nope, I told you before. We don’t want to pester the main family. My ambition to be a knight is for my mother and our future livelihood.”

“...Alright, as a gentle elder, I will believe my foolish brother.”

“I am very...grateful.”

Baltsar resumed his cold smile, patted Chid on the shoulder and left. Chid who was left alone sighed deeply.

‘He didn’t plan to do anything to me here, but he won’t let us off so easily. If he is just picking on me, I can endure it. I hope he doesn’t cause any stupid commotion.’

But the looming sense of trouble lingered within Chid, contrary to what he thought.

Chapter 4: Let's try dueling

Spring of C.E. 1276.

It had been 2 years since Ernesti and the others enrolled in Laihiala Pilot Academy. Their lifestyle remained the same. First of all, Ernesti Echevarria...

"Alright, this year we will be working on 'Silhouette Knight Design and Application'... Ah, you are here..."

During this period when the school welcomed new students and the new academic year began, the teacher who came into the classroom glanced at the short student occupying the center seat of the front row. As a third year primary school student, Eru had gained fame for attending the engineering department's courses despite being from the Knighthood department.

"The knighthood department's teachers have surrendered."

"Yes, I am happy to meet teachers who are so understanding."

He slightly tilted his head and smiled. He might have looked really cute, but with his background in bullying the teachers to accommodate his schedule, the scene was not warming at all. After promoting to the next academic grade, Eru used his abilities to destroy all of the classes that got in the way of the courses he wanted to attend. The Knighthood teachers were deeply depressed over this, and the engineering department had given in. The teacher sighed deeply and focused on his lesson. If you ignored his shenanigans, Eru was a bright and passionate student, so the teachers gave him more leeway.

Next were the twins Archid and Adeltrud.

They were the training grounds of the knighthood department. Class was in session so no one should be here. The boy and girl practicing in the field were Archid and Adeltrud. They followed Eru's lead to go beyond the scope of the lessons given by the school and had been conducting personal training. For the past two years, instead of taking magic classes, they had been conducting this special training. Eru was not present because he had to attend some other class.

“Okay, I will be going all out next.”

“What's up? Your hits are harder than usual.”

Chid waved his hands at the suspicious Ady, gesturing that nothing was wrong as he tightened his grip on his weapon. His build was excellent for his age, and the sword in his hand was one size bigger than the standard. Even though it was a wooden sword used for training, it was still imposing.

In contrast, Ady held two thin swords, and her battle style was similar to Eru's, focusing more on agility rather than strength.

Apart from that, their weapons had a strange attachment. Made from the wood of the white mist tree, a gun staff based off of normal magic staves—the latest ‘Gandiva’ model. Driven by his interest, Eru used the knowledge from his previous life to design the ‘Winchester’, but there was no need for the twins to use the same weapon. Instead, their Gandiva were more polished, evolving to the state where it could be attached to any sword. It was designed by Eru and made by their wonderful neighbor—the Termonen Workshop.

The two of them adopted a stance and faced each other, activating their magic before raising their swords. They switched smoothly between sword attacks and magic, displaying the power of their weapons, which merged the sword and the staff—the ability of the gun staff. They were using limited physical boost. After Ernesti tweaked with its script, the spell was easier to use than the previous version, and more importantly, it improved the sustainability. They held true to Eru's teachings, training their body and magic at the same time, efficiently improving their mana pools. The crystallization of their hard work was clear for all to see.

With the start of the battle training, Chid took a strong step forward. His strengthened muscles propelled him ahead, putting his opponent within sword range. This was Chid's preferred fighting style—practical usage of the length of his oversized sword. Thanks to Mathias's training, his style, which placed emphasis on the gauging of distance and skill, was a real threat.

Ady used the agility of her swords to counter this. Because of her limited physical boost, her slashes turned into a whirlwind, bypassing Chid's sword and going straight for his body. Even though his weapon was large, Chid still managed to shorten the attack range of his sword to ward off Ady's attack. But Ady didn't back down, shifting positions constantly as she waited for an opening. The fierce exchange made others doubt that this was really a mock battle. The two continued to spar until their mana and endurance were sapped.

Because these two learned magic from Eru who thought about things differently, this sort of training was normal for them. But simple things for them—using magic and swords simultaneously in training—were not taught in primary school. If a third party was around, they would probably doubt their common sense.

“Really... I can't stand you guys, what did Eru teach you...”

That was how Stefania who was watching felt.

“Hmm...it was magic and the sword right?”

Watching the twins tilt their heads and answer at the same time, Stefania could only smile bitterly. This was not a style you could learn just by 'learning magic'.

“With your standards, I'm not sure if I can win.”

“Really? Winning against the top student of the knighthood department who is also the student council president can't be that easy?”

Stefania had reasons to be worried. Normal students would learn using magic and swordplay during battles in secondary school. If someone started doing so from primary school, how far

could they grow? The answer was right before her.

She was the top in her department in results, daughter of a Marquis, and with her excellent personality, she was elected as the student council president. But after seeing the capability of her half-siblings, Stefania was still shocked. The twins were too used to Eru's standard, so their benchmark was different from normal people. Stefania thought about correcting their mindset in order to avoid trouble in the future.

There were only the three of them in the training ground. They were focused on training and distracting themselves with chit chat, not paying attention to their surroundings, so they failed to notice the shadow lurking behind the thin wall near the training ground entrance.



While class was in session, the sound of footsteps echoed in the empty dormitory, the students were all away.

The person walking was agitated, his pace fast as he reached his desired room shortly, his dorm room. He unlocked the door with trembling hands and rushed in as if chased. For a dormitory, this personal room was spacious and was arranged by the school with safety considerations in mind. Aristocrats staying in dorms were all assigned personal rooms.

The male student stood by the door listlessly for a while. He couldn't hold in his agitation anymore and kicked the furniture in the room, the sound reverberating loudly.

“What is...that...how could it be...damn, damn damn!”

The male student, Baltsar Serrati, cursed, feeling extremely frustrated. He was upset because he had witnessed the training session of his sister and half-siblings.

Baltsar was a first year student in middle school of the knighthood department and had just started using magic and swordplay at the same time. He was troubled by the difficult training, but his siblings were doing what he couldn't with ease. It was clear that their abilities were far ahead of him. For the proud Baltsar, he couldn't stand that the bastard children were stronger than him. This thought filled him with rage, and he realized the existence of Chid and Ady was a threat to his goal.

Baltsar's goal was related to his 'family'.

His family... The 'Marquis Serrati Family', was one of the most notable aristocratic families in Fremmevira Kingdom. Their territory wasn't large, and it occupied a place that was flat and filled with farmland. It was situated to the east of the kingdom near to the Bocuse Sea of Forests and suffered from frequent attacks by demon beasts. In order to fend them off, the marquis commanded one of the top bands of knights within the country—the 'Red Rhino Knights'. It was a critical place that bordered the front lines, and as a result, the land had prospered economically, with merchants passing through the main economic artery constantly.

Marquis Serrati, the ruler of this land, had three children. The eldest, Artos, was the heir of the marquis, receiving an education befitting a noble, and was starting to help his father manage the territory. The eldest daughter, Stefania, was studying in her second year of middle school at Laihiala Pilot Academy, while the second son, Baltsar, was in his first year.

“If this carries on... If that brat shows up at the main family...”

The titles of nobility were basically inherited by the eldest son, the other children did not get any land or property. They needed to forge their own path forward, most of them becoming knights or bureaucrats. Baltsar chose becoming a knight without hesitation since the Serrati Marquis clan was in command of the famous Red Rhino Knights. In the Kingdom of knights, protecting

the people from demon beast attacks was the noblesse oblige of the aristocrats. It was natural for him to set this as his goal.

“If those bastards come into contact with the Red Rhino Knights...maybe...”

The entire kingdom, including the Serrati counties, had no competition⁶ amongst its knights. The knights were expected to be ready to fight the demon beasts at a moment's notice, and it was very demanding in terms of ability for those aspiring to be commanders. Being strong in combat skills didn't guarantee the right to be a leader of the knights, but the stronger someone was, the more respect they would garner in a military organization.

Baltsar imagined himself leading the order of knights with his brother. He had never doubted that future until the rise of the twins. This cast a shadow in his heart. Even though they were children of a mistress, their capabilities were high and with ties to the marquis by bloodline, they might seize the advantage and realize their dream before Baltsar. His entitled position being stripped by his bastard younger siblings was a nightmare.

“That's right... I have to get rid of them.”

He reflected upon why he had let the situation deteriorate so much, and the conclusion was that he was too careless, thinking of them only as bastards who would never match him. Because of his foolish overconfidence, he ignored that incident during the first day of school. He realized he was wrong, the situation was very pressing and every second counted. He needed to work quickly to dispose of them, but the twins were too strong, it would be unwise to challenge them head-on. He needed to suppress their strength, a safe and efficient way.

Baltsar raised his head, his worries all gone.

He was not dumb. His willingness to sacrifice others allowed him to come up with despicable and effective methods. The usual cold smile widened, his ugly feelings stronger than before.



One day after class, Batson Termonen walked along the corridor with heavy steps, preparing to head for his next class. He looked around and discovered a familiar figure. He noticed that person because she was a childhood friend.

“Is that Ady? Who is she...with?”

As he wondered about what Ady was doing, Batson became suspicious. Not because Ady was with someone, but because she was with a student he didn’t know. From afar, her face looked stiff.

“Should I alert them?”

Batson was not overreacting because Ady was with a stranger, but her expression looked weird, and that worried Batson. She might be in trouble, so Batson decided to express his spirit of consideration.

After making up his mind, Batson turned around and searched for his petite friend who was probably in a classroom nearby.

“Baltsar-oniisama, what’s wrong?”

Adeltrud clenched her fists, her eyes searching around her and her slightly fierce demeanor growing stronger.

Baltsar stood before her with his usual smile. That was still bearable. Although it upset people who look at him, Ady had gotten used to it. The problem was with the people around them. There were three of them behind Baltsar and four behind Ady. Male students she did not know blocked her way after Baltsar gave a

signal. They were probably his lackeys.

Ady was stopped by Baltsar in the corridor and brought to a deserted area. Although she was not close with Baltsar, they were still family, so she let down her guard. Ady thought she was being brought to a quiet place so others wouldn't hear him picking on her. She was surrounded before she realized it. From the atmosphere and their unfriendly gazes, Ady guessed that this was probably not a 'happy chat'.

"These are my friends. Nothing much, they are here to help me teach disobedient brats their manners eh?"

Baltsar's companions smiled quietly.

"I learned about manners in class, there is no need to trouble everyone."

"The teacher is not enough to teach the brats of a mistress. Your brother is teaching you personally, shouldn't you be lowering your head and begging for your lesson?"

A hand stuck out from behind Baltsar.

"That's right, be a good girl and..."

The nameless lackey was careless...he thought they had the overwhelming advantage with their numbers, and the target was a girl younger than them. Ady judged that there was no need to argue anymore, pulling out her gun staff before he finished. She immediately used Limited Physical Boost and elbowed the lackey in the stomach before he could react.

"You are too noisy!"

She needed to break through the encirclement to get away. She dropped one opponent and took the chance to run with her enhanced leg power. Because of her sudden retaliation, the encirclement was full of holes, but just as she was about to get away...

"Spark Dart."

A arrow of lightning landed on Ady's back at the command of this calm voice. She couldn't even scream, a hoarse sound escaped from the her mouth as the air was pushed out of her lungs. It was not lethal, but the direct lightning hit numbed her body, so she tripped and fell.

'Uguu! I screwed up...can't, conscious...fading...'

Incredibly, she remembered the smug expression on Baltsar's face as she blacked out. He was not haughty like usual, but was wearing a foreboding smile.



Sometime after Ady blacked out.

Chid had no idea what happened, he was just a bit concerned that Ady didn't return when class had begun. When he was thinking about ditching class to search for her, he met an unexpected guest.

"Oh? You were in class...that saves me the trouble."

Baltsar appeared before him. Chid was shocked, he had maintained his distance from Baltsar during his time in the main family, and Baltsar always chose inconspicuous places to talk to him. But they were conversing in a public place right now and Chid was unsure of how to address him.

"Senpai, do you have anything for me?"

Chid couldn't hide his confusion and asked. Baltsar was

smiling as usual as he announced in a loud voice:

“I challenge you to a duel!”

The rowdy classroom was silenced, followed by an eruption of noise. Students in the classroom chatted excitedly with each other, discussing the current exciting topic ‘duel!’.

“What are you saying...”

“You can’t understand? Ha, I expected as much. I have been letting an eye sore like you off for too long, I can’t forgive such insolence anymore. That’s right, I have to set you straight.”

Chid was baffled because everything had been set in motion without his knowledge. Baltsar’s actions confounded him. But he was sure of one thing.

“I don’t get what you are thinking... Duel? Alright, it’s on!”

He also hated Baltsar. His fighting spirit overcame the query in his heart and he accepted readily. Chid would let it go if Baltsar had picked on him verbally as usual. But if Baltsar issued a challenge head-on, Chid had no intention of hiding his displeasure.

“How uncouth...your manners are lacking. Let’s see how long you can stay arrogant.”

Class was abandoned and the whole group tagged along with them out of the campus.

Laihiala Pilot Academy restricted fights between students. It was ridiculous for knights protecting citizens to fight amongst themselves. Those who broke the rules would face all sorts of punishment. However, the only exception was a fight known as a ‘duel’.

Duels had their own set of rules: they had to be one on one; the duel required both parties to agree; a third party has to act as the referee—the referee has absolute authority; the match would be decided when one party lost consciousness or surrendered; they had to use wooden training swords, and spells that release projectiles

were banned to avoid collateral damage to others. In the end, the main point was to ‘settle it yourself’.

By its nature, the knighthood department had lots of hot-headed students, so settling disputes by duels was common. There was even a fixed place within the academy known as the ‘Duel Arena’.

News of Baltsar and Chid’s duel spread through the academy instantly. They had been anticipating this and the challenge became issued prominently, resulting in a large crowd gathering to witness the battle.

A student who was unrelated to either of them volunteered to be the referee. He read out the rules of the duel in a loud voice and confirmed the acceptance by the two participants. When they faced each other, Baltsar took out something from his shirt pocket. Chid turned stiff when he saw it.

‘Isn’t that... The hair pin Ady was wearing in the morning!? Why... Did he...!?’

The shocked Chid looked at Baltsar, and their eyes met. Baltsar was smiling more intensely today, and Chid understood his goal, why Baltsar had proposed a duel and why it was being done in public.

“You... What did you do to Ady...”

“Hmmm? I don’t know what you mean.”

Baltsar’s expression twisted as if he was trying to control his laughter, confirming Chid’s suspicion.

“That’s right, I heard a rumor the other day. You can use high-level spells as a primary school student, an amazing achievement! Can you show them to me?”

Chid made a spiteful groan. It was obvious why Baltsar raised this issue, he wanted everyone present to hear Chid saying he couldn’t use them to shame him. The way he flashed the hair pin made Baltsar’s intentions clear.

“...I can’t use them anyway...”

Chid answered as if he was squeezing air out of his lungs, baffling the audience. Chid was one of the famous trio in primary school that was exempted from class by the teachers. The crowd was chattering, wondering why someone so far ahead in magic education was saying something like this? Were the rumors false?

“Huh? What a joke! Ha! The gossip was fake? Really, to be exposed so easily! Where did that attitude of yours go? Hah!”

If eyes could kill, Chid would have murdered Baltsar with his gaze by now. Baltsar didn’t mind and continued with a laugh:

“Hey hey hey, wanting to stand out even if you have to lie, what a naughty boy. Correcting the error of kouhai is the senpai’s⁷ job right? Okay, it’s about time to begin.”

Baltsar lifted his sword and staff while Chid quietly attached his Gandiva to his wooden sword. What followed was not a duel anymore but an execution.

“What’s with you? Such a spoilsport. You can’t use magic and you’re subpar with swordsmanship!?”

Baltsar taunted as they sparred. Chid was enraged and wanted to counterattack, but Baltsar was flashing the hair pin from time to time to warn him.

About 30 minutes into the fight, everyone could see that the battle was lopsided. Chid was slow and was the only one taking hits. He tried countering a few times, but his strength was lacking. The pitiful state of the rumored student disappointed the crowd. ‘Rumors are just rumors’, ‘Where did the misunderstanding start’, ‘The ending will be the arrogant kouhai facing reality’, ‘Such a boring fight’... There were even some who left impatiently.

But some of the students felt uneasy. Chid was hit directly a lot of the time, but he kept up his stance. He didn’t take damage? Baltsar who was enjoying the overwhelming advantage noticed it and took pleasure in tormenting Chid.

Since he couldn't defeat Baltsar, Chid had to tank the attacks. He was unsure of how long he could endure. Even so, he was still waiting for the chance to counterattack. He didn't know if he still had a chance, but he clung on desperately to this hope. Chid's most trustworthy friend was not here, but he definitely knew about this commotion after such a big uproar, so his absence meant he was on the move.

*'I leave it to you my friend... You are my only hope!'*⁸



Chid gritted his teeth and took the hit from Baltsar with a staggering stance.



At the same time, Ernesti was walking quietly along the corridor. After listening to his childhood friend Batson's explanation, Eru had begun searching for Ady. But he was troubled by the fact that there were no clues. Suddenly, someone hugged him from behind. Eru was startled and looked up to see Stefania caressing his hair with a blissful face.

"Ah, so soft and smooth that you wouldn't ever want to let go."

"...E, Stefania-senpai?"

"It's the fault of these silky smooth locks... You. Impish. Devil."

Stefania rubbed her face with Eru's hair as she poked his cheek. Eru was baffled by her reaction as usual, but inspiration struck. Maybe Stefania has some clues.

"Stefania-senpai, you came at just the right time. Do you know where Ady is?"

Stefania who was all smiles became sullen and worried. She looked at the confused Eru straight in the eye.

"I think Baltsar was meeting Ady."

"Balt... Your brother? He, Chid and Ady..."

Eru hesitated uncharacteristically. He had heard about Baltsar...and things about him. If Ady was taken by him, there was no telling what could happen. But Eru still hesitated, since this was a family affair after all. Eru couldn't judge how deeply he could interfere, but Stefania blew all of his worries away with one sentence.

“...Also, Balt brought lots of lackeys with him.”

“I don't like commenting on another family's affairs, but that sounds ominous.”

Eru's heart was not as calm as his tone. It would be fine if it was in the realm of 'sibling fights'. But this was different if he brought a gang with him, which meant Ady is in danger.

“I can't really ask you for help for this...but I hope you can look for Ady.”

“...Will that be fine? Let me say this first, if he harms Ady, I won't forgive him even if he is your brother.”

Eru's eyes were usually mature, but a dangerous gleam shined in them. Chid and Ady were his best friends in this world, if someone brought a group to harm them, he didn't plan to hold back. Stefania watched him seethe in anger and drooped her beautiful eyebrows.

“...Please restrain from killing him.”

“You are pretty cool about this.”

“It's fine if Baltsar moves alone. Well, that's not really good... But I can stop him. But it's not the same this time. I can't overlook this as the student council president or as his sister.”

Stefania said softly as she tightened her hug slowly. Eru couldn't imagine her expression and simply asked:

“Can you tell me where Ady has been brought to?”



Laihiala Pilot Academy had a large campus and most of it wasn't in use. Ady and Baltsar's lackeys were likely in one of the empty classrooms.

The group sat Ady in a chair, tied her legs down with her hands behind her. It had been about an hour since Ady was knocked out by Baltsar, and she still hadn't awakened. The four lackeys who surrounded her were arguing about something.

"Cheh! Little brat, she hit me!"

"Hey, she's still sleeping, calm down."

So many people had been left to guard the unconscious Ady to prevent her from making a scene when she awakened. The noisy boy was the one who took an elbow from Ady, who had just regained consciousness.

"Why? She is out and tied down, there's no need to be afraid."

"Says the guy who got knocked down."

"Uguu! I was careless!"

He grabbed Ady's hair and lifted her head, clenching his fist with a violent smile.

"Look at this brat, getting cocky because I didn't go all out. She is going to get it now!"

The other lackeys thought he was going too far. He didn't fall

because he was holding back; he was knocked out in an instant because he was too careless. And if he punched her and Ady woke up, things would get messy. Their goal was to restrain her for a short time, it would be easier if she continued sleeping. Just as another lackey was about to stop him...

“Hello... Anyone here.... Oh, there is.”

At this moment, a shadow appeared from the back of the classroom. The group naively thought that no one would come, so their reactions were slower than the intruder's. When they realized their situation, they saw a silver bullet shooting out from a weird magic staff towards their faces.

The intruder—Ernesti—knew his ‘hunch was right’ when he saw the lackeys, or rather Adeltrud, who was tied to the chair behind them. All that was left was to dispose of the enemy. He drew the Winchester without hesitation and cast a mid-level wind spell on his left and right—Aero Damned. The projectile hit the two at the back of the room directly, being blasted away before they could even scream. Eru didn't wait for them to land before activating Physical Boost to enhance his agility and strike at the boy that was about to punch Ady. The boy panicked and attempted to block, but he couldn't match Eru whose speed had been enhanced. Eru cast a Sonic Boom with his staff while running, blowing the boy away.

Seeing three of his companions flying in an instant, the remaining lackey gave up attempting to understand the situation. Regrettably, his opponent wasn't gentle enough to let this chance slip by. The lackey raised his staff unconsciously, but it was broken in half. The other Winchester swung back horizontally... That was the last thing he remembered.

After instantly knocking out the four lackeys like a whirlwind, Eru checked to make sure they were really down and ran to Ady. He cut the ropes on her and checked for injuries. Ady seemed to be fine, and her breathing was normal, so she was probably unconscious. Eru was relieved after confirming that Ady was safe and proceeded to tie up the lackeys who were knocked out. Fortunately they prepared ropes...although they were not meant to be used on themselves. After making sure they couldn't move, he looked toward the direction of the arena.

“There might not be much time left.”

From the commotion he saw on the way here, Eru could imagine the situation over there. Ady was kidnapped then Baltsar appeared before Chid, his actions were too easy to guess. That was why he was worried about Chid who was caught in the middle of all this. But he believed Chid would not give in so easily. Eru believed that if he hurried, he would be able to make it. That was why he wanted to rush over immediately, but...

Eru looked at Ady on the floor and felt troubled. Should he feel depressed? It would be a hassle to bring Ady over since she was taller than him. But he couldn't leave her here like this. *Uguu*, he groaned and gave in, struggling to carry her in his arms. It was a challenge to keep his balance, but Eru used magic he was proficient in to tide over it.

“I must make it in time...”

In order to reach Chid as soon as possible, Eru took long strides as he ran.



In a place known as the ‘Duel Arena’ within Laihiala Pilot Academy, two students had fought for over an hour. Although the battle was lopsided, it didn't feel like it would end any time soon.

After sparring this long, Baltsar finally realized something was off. As he expected, Chid's movements were sluggish because of his scheme and his strikes landed true countless times. Even though it

was a wooden sword, normal people would still have incurred serious wounds that would put them out of the fight. Chid's movements became slower, but he showed no signs of taking serious damage. Chid might not be attacking because of the hostage, but his eyes were still strong. He was obviously waiting for his chance.

‘Why can this brat take so much damage? Why is he still standing!? Is he going to buy time for Adeltrud to escape by herself? Adeltrud is very agile, but there is no way she can escape, could it be...’

Baltsar laughed. Chid didn't know that Ady wasn't just tied up, she was under guard too. This meant that his plan was doomed right from the start.

Chid was startled when Baltsar stopped attacking. Baltsar's laughter was unnatural, and he attempted to stamp out Chid's hope.

“Archid, are you stalling for time?”

“...!”

“I thought so. You think ‘that’ will come if you wait? I can only tell you it is all in vain, ‘that’ is tied up securely.”

Baltsar could hear Chid grinding his teeth, it stirred a murky joy within him.

“Well, I'm growing tired of this. It's regrettable, but let's end it, shall we?”

Baltsar flashed Ady's hairpin and lifted his wooden sword. Chid tensed his face. To be honest, he was not in good shape, contrary to how he looked. Although he was using ‘some method’ to minimize damage, it was still accumulating little by little. It would be hard to gauge whether Chid could endure an all-out attack. But Baltsar has been sending out a strong message, ‘do not dodge’. Baltsar probably wanted to finish this for real, his next strike would be at full power. Chid was not confident that he could withstand this unscathed.

The two of them put more strength into their stances than

before. The spectators that were still around could feel that this was the final attack and held their breath. As Baltsar was planning to launch his attack and charge in, someone intruded into the arena.

The figure leapt over the heads of the crowd and reached the front row. The arc of his jump was huge, and he was moving very quickly despite carrying a girl in his arms. His footfalls were silent as if he was stepping on a soft surface. The eyes of the audience naturally fall on this petite figure.

The figure was Eru carrying Ady. Baltsar cast a sideways glance over and made a twisted face when he recognized them. Ady should have been tied up, and he even posted guards. Did he overcome these obstacles and break Ady out? What were the guards doing? More importantly, who was this silver-haired kid? Baltsar's head was full of questions, but no one was giving him answers.

Eru put Ady down. She had regained consciousness on their way here and stood up by herself. The first thing she did was glare at Baltsar. Then she turned toward Chid, sliding her thumb across her neck with a violent smile. Chid relaxed his body when he saw Ady safe and had the urge to smile. He nodded and complained to Eru who was standing behind her.

“So slow.”

“Sorry, there are too many rooms.”

“That so. Nah, never mind.”

Chid smiled and raised his wooden sword. Nothing was holding him back. The time to counterattack was finally here.

Baltsar wanted to scream. He knew that this was the worst case scenario. But when he thought about it, the damage he inflicted on Chid remained, even though he lost the trump card of Ady as a hostage. He should take the chance and strike quickly at full power. Baltsar put his thoughts into action and slashed at Chid.

But Chid displayed his outstanding agility. His sluggish movements earlier seemed to be an act. He stepped forward lightly, parrying the attack and bumping Baltsar back with a shoulder

tackle to keep their distance.

Chid had expended a considerable amount of mana after dragging the fight for so long. But he had been going through tough training under Eru since he was young and had enough gas left in the tank for one final attack.

“I will take back everything you owe me in one hit!”

Chid yelled loudly and activated the Physical Boost he learned from Eru. A wild surge of energy flowed through his body, and he sprinted forward with enough power to almost crack the floor. Before Baltsar could scramble and get up, Chid’s sword hit his stomach. The air in his lungs was pushed out and the hoarse sound ‘hyaa’ escaped from Baltsar’s mouth as he was launched into the air. Chid followed with a series of air combos before he fell to the ground. Baltsar’s body was twisted unnaturally. Before Baltsar’s body lost speed and started to tumble, Chid followed up with a roundhouse kick as the finishing move. Baltsar’s body crumpled into a ball and rolled away before stopping in a heap several meters away.

The referee came to his senses after Chid took a deep breath and ran to Baltsar, finding him sprawled out like an old rag, his eyes white and mouth foaming. The result was obvious and the referee raised one hand to announced Chid’s victory to the crowd.

The unexpected ending made the battle before look like a lie. The audience couldn’t keep up with the rapid development.

Although Chid was as formidable as rumored, far beyond the capabilities of Baltsar, they did not understand why he was being overwhelmed for the past hour.

The spectators looked at the young girl running towards Chid. They weren’t stupid. They could link the appearance of her with the sudden display of strength by Chid. The answer was obvious.

The eyes staring at Baltsar turned cold. For knighthood majors, although duels were a way to resolve disputes, the glory of the victor was sacred. If anyone defiled the duel with despicable schemes, it went against the way of the knight. The crowd was

unsympathetic when Baltsar's lackeys carried him to the infirmary.

But Chid was badly injured, falling on his butt after letting out his victory cry.

"Chid! Hey Chid, are you okay?"

"I'm not doing so good, I took quite a beating."

"Your clothes are all tattered... Why didn't you dodge, stupid!"

"He kept waving that in front of me... I couldn't dodge even if I wanted to."

"...! Sorry, I was...too careless..."

Looking at Ady's tears and depressed face, Chid stroked her hair and said with a smile.

"Don't worry, this is all the fault of that idiot. And Eru, thanks, that was close."

"I'm glad I made it in time. But enough about this..."

Eru retrieved the hair pin from Baltsar without anyone noticing and handed it to Ady saying:

"You are all beat up, but seems like there are no serious injuries."

"Yeah, that guy was attacking recklessly because I couldn't dodge and was boasting about his skills."

Chid said sheepishly.

"I used Physical Boost and Hard Skin just before being hit to keep the damage down."

"I see. You managed to pull off a dangerous skill there."

“I can do it because I don’t need to think about anything else... And it worked because he was so stupid. If he concentrated his attacks on my soft spots, I wouldn’t have been able to hold out for so long.”

“In other words, this guy lost because he was too cocky.”

As Eru nodded, the crowd started to disperse.

“I will settle the loose ends. Ady, can you please take Chid to the infirmary?”

“I understand. Chid, can you stand?”

“I’m fine, my injuries are mostly bruises, just let me take it slow.”

Eru saw the twins off, watching Chid’s staggering figure as he and Ady headed toward the infirmary. Only Stefania was left in the arena.

“Is this okay? Your brother is badly injured.”

“...He is, but his actions warranted this punishment.”

Stefania looked refreshed and shook her head.

“That child... He resembles Mother in that way... About time he learns his lesson.”

“It must be hard on you...”

Eru felt conflicted when he thought about Chid and Ady’s family troubles. But he shook his head and changed his mood.

“Can I leave the clean-up to you?”

“Okay, I have to explain to my family anyway.”

Eru bowed to Stefania who nodded in agreement and left. In the end, some of the people in the audience were interested in this

commotion and discussed the relations between Chid and the Serrati family.



A few days after the duel.

The disgraced Baltsar was warned sternly by the school and his family, and he was grounded at home after some deliberation. To reform him, Baltsar was sent to the Red Rhino Knights for training, the place of his dreams. It was hard to say if this is a good or bad thing. But it was great for Eru and company that had one less issue to worry about.

One day after school had peacefully ended, Ady spotted Eru who was reading in the campus garden. He was not a prominent person and it was not easy to spot his petite figure. But his head of silver hair was an easy landmark to spot when there were less people around. He sat under the shade of a tree, reading a thick book as usual. She didn't even need to ask, it was a textbook on Silhouette Knights.

Ady walked to his side, but Eru didn't seem to notice. When he was engrossed in a book, Eru would be totally absorbed and not pay attention to his surroundings. Ady sat down beside him, staring at his profile intensely. His blue eyes with long lashes gazing down at the book. His hair flowing down along his face, shining brightly in the sun. His lips tightly shut, reflecting his intense passion.

'Eru is cute as usual...'

Ady giggled ‘hehe’ happily and was preparing to pounce on him, but she was stopped by an image in her mind. The memories from the dueling incident.

When Eru rescued Ady when she was kidnapped by Baltsar, he had carried her princess-style to the arena in the middle of the crowd. She didn’t pay any heed to this as her mind was filled with anger, but when Ady thought back, she discovered that it was a pretty embarrassing scene. Not just embarrassing, she remembered the joy of being rescued by Eru, and how it felt in his arms, Ady blushed from just being next to Eru.

‘Hya, I thought about that again...’

Ady was glad that Eru didn’t notice her feelings. Her complicated feelings were making her hesitant to hug Eru like before. Ady was unhappy with how she was acting and forcefully hugged Eru. Eru calmly greeted Ady who pounced on him suddenly and closed his book.

It might be strange, but Eru had been treated like a ‘soft toy’ by many others since a young age and was used to being hugged. And Ady was the one who started the ‘hugging trend’, so it was no surprise for Eru, but he noticed that Ady wasn’t her usual self and tilted his head curiously.



Ady was troubled by her unexpected actions. Usually, she would stroke his hair while chatting with him. But when she hugged him this time, she could feel her heart drumming intensely, she couldn't do anything else. Ady buried her head into Eru's hair to hide her blushing expression from him.

'Wah... Why does it turn out this way! Oh no, I can't lift my head.'

Ady was too nervous and forgot that she could just let go. Eru was a bit surprised by her reaction and decided to keep reading his book since she was not moving.

'It feels like I am an idiot, give me some reaction!'

In a way, this nonsensical anger calmed her mind. Ady poked Eru's cheek angrily.

"Hey, please go poke someone else's cheek."

"...So cute!"

Ady regained her normal demeanor. Eru felt more comfortable to hug than usual, and she started to caress his head. The two of them didn't realize it, but a few students in the garden were enjoying the sight of the pretty black-haired girl and silver-haired girl(?) playing around. That was how their daily life continued, every day was peaceful.

Demon Beast Attack Arc

Chapter 5: Shadow of the giant beast

In the past, humans only ruled half of the Zetterlund continent, with the eastern land beyond the Aubigne Mountain Range being uncharted lands dominated by demon beasts.

With the Silhouette Knights as their main force, humanity pushed the demon beasts back and ventured into the east beyond the Aubigne Mountains. The humans were doing well in the beginning, but their invasion grinded to a halt. The east of Aubigne was covered by the Bocuse Sea of Trees, with demon beasts that could take on hundreds of Silhouette Knights lurking inside. Suffering huge losses, the humans retreated out of the forest.

There were vast plains of land at the foot of Aubigne Mountains which was suitable for agricultural use after some development. To protect this piece of land, they expanded their territory to the edge of the forest and formed a country. This was the story behind the founding of Fremmevira Kingdom. There were still demon beasts wandering in the Bocuse Forest that might appear on a whim. To keep the demon beasts away, walls were erected along the borders, and fortresses were set up at the place where demon beasts showed up most frequently... The entrance to the Bocuse Forest known as the 'Rabid Road'⁹. Castle walls were then erected between such fortresses. As it was physically

impossible to cover the whole border with siege walls, they could not completely deter demon beasts that approached from places not covered by siege walls. The siege walls were mainly effective against titanic demon beasts, and thanks to the nation's defensive efforts, the kingdom remained relatively safe.

This happened during a certain quiet night.

Balguerie Stronghold was one of the fortresses lying between the forest and the borders of Fremmevira Kingdom. It was quite far from 'Rabid Road', even visits from mid-sized demon beasts were rare, an outpost guarded by ten Silhouette Knights.

That night, the guards on duty felt there was something wrong with the unusual silence in the Bocuse Forest. The stars sparkled brightly in the night sky. There was usually a couple of howls from demon beasts on a night like this, but instead, there was an unnatural stillness. They couldn't even feel the presence of the animals, as if they had all evacuated. Although it was unnatural, there was no indication of anything happening. Baffled, they continued to make their rounds.

The silence did not last long. They heard the sound of trees being crushed in the distance. It was obvious that something was approaching... Demon beasts. The guards raised the alarm without hesitation.

"What the hell, a demon beast so late at night!?"

"We're from the Rabid Road, what is it doing so far in the countryside?"

The knights in the fortress prepared themselves when the alarm horn sounded. The outpost was a hive of activity as they mustered together their equipment with haste. Listening to the sound of trees being crushed, the men could feel the crisis looming. The Knight Runners on duty jumped into their Silhouette Knights. The Silhouette Knights deployed at this fortress were the standard 'Karrdator' model of Fremmevira. The ether reactor was forcefully started from a dormant state, its hum reverberating around it.

The Silhouette Knights checked through their start-up procedures and speedily gathered at the gate of the fortress. At this

time, the thing that had been crushing trees appeared. The demon beast was like a small moving mountain, covered in an uneven shell of rocks like a porcupine. A head and four limbs protruded from the sides, the shape resembling a tortoise, an eighty-meter long and fifty-meter tall tortoise.

The guard on duty on the wall had only seen an ‘Land Emperor’ in books—a type of demon beast known as a ‘Behemoth’. Its primary features were its toughness and endurance. With its reputation of being a walking citadel, it was a difficult enemy to handle. To put it simply, the behemoth’s greatest power was ‘Strengthening’. It used overwhelming mana output to maintain its strengthening spell, and support a physically impossible body structure. It also enabled it to move with a speed contrary to its appearance and hardening every part of its body from shell to skeleton, possessing incredible toughness. It was said that a behemoth mainly used a body slam to attack and could shatter siege walls. Its ‘heart’, which was proportionate with its large body, could generate mana equivalent to over 100 Silhouette Knights. With its endless endurance, the defense of the behemoth was almost impossible to break through. This was a behemoth, a fortress-like demon beast with incredibly high defense.

“Demon beast identified... It’s an ‘Land Emperor’...! A behemoth!”

Before the pilots could process the guard’s screaming report, the behemoth slammed into the walls of the stronghold. Its intentions were unknown as the behemoth attacked the fortress from the front. Using the body weight and the toughness that the behemoth took pride in, the demon beast turned itself into a battering ram. The siege wall and gate made of iron and stone were destroyed with one hit, the debris splattering all over. The minds of the pilots witnessing this scene turned blank.

After hearing the reports of the guard and the destruction to the stronghold, the pilots’ faces showed shock and awe. Who would have known that a battalion-level demon beast would show up at a place so far away from Rabid Road? A battalion-level demon beast required a battalion¹⁰ of Silhouette Knights to defeat it. But there was only a squad¹¹ of Silhouette Knights stationed at this outpost, ten Silhouette Knights if you included the captain. This was enough to keep duel-level¹² demon beasts in check but was overwhelmingly

weak compared to a battalion-level demon beast.

It would be suicidal to take a stand against the demon beast, but the Knight Runners did not waver. They did not know why the behemoth was heading into the kingdom of Fremmevira, but if they allowed it to push through without warning headquarters, the result would be disastrous. It was impossible to stop a behemoth with the forces stationed at Balguerie Stronghold, but if they stalled for time, they might find the weak spot of the beast. They hardened their resolve and charged forward bravely.

With the walls breached, the behemoth broke down the remnants of the gate and walked into the stronghold. Its howl shook the fortress like an explosion.

The squad of Karrdators moved with this cue, pointing their Silhouette Arms, 'Culverin', at the behemoth. The knights channeled their mana into the spear-shaped weapons, the emblem grafts converted it into physical phenomena. Magic scripts and mana beyond the capability of humans to process were activated, forming overt spells. Flames erupted from the tips of the spears and scoring direct hits on the beast with explosive sounds, burning it with a pillar of fire. Normal beasts would have fallen under this attack, but the behemoth lived up to its name of a moving fortress and was completely unfazed by the strike. But this was within the expectations of the Karrdators, and they continued the onslaught of flames with their Culverins, covering the beast in smoke and fire.

The power of the Silhouette Arms was strong, but the expenditure of mana was very intensive. All the Karrdators kept up the attack until their mana reserves were depleted. To replenish their mana pool, they revved their ether reactors to absorb ether from the air. The reactors moaned louder as they worked even harder.

The entrance of the stronghold was blazing in a sea of fire after the continuous assault by the Silhouette Knights. The crackling flames and smoke shrouded the behemoth completely and the knights lost track of the beast. There were merely ten Silhouette Knights, but even a battalion-level beast should sustain some injury under their all-out attack. Just when the pilots were thinking about that, a howl made the earth shudder, the shock wave dispersed the flames and the behemoth appeared from behind the smoke. Reality

betrayed their wishful thinking, the behemoth's gigantic body was unscathed.

The behemoth rushed toward the squads of Karrdators with a momentum that didn't match its size, the speed was so fast the Karrdators could not evade in time. The Silhouette Knights were down after receiving a solid blow. The steel plates caved in an instant and the limbs were smashed. The sparkling crystal shards flew out from the gaps between the armor. There was no way the Knight Runners survived.

The other Karrdators fell back, keeping a distance from the beast. The behemoth attacked with a deceptively quick pace, knocking away the Karrdator that could only fire off a flame bullet in futile resistance.

The remaining Silhouette Knights judged that their magic attacks were ineffective and surrounded the behemoth, attacking with swords. But just as the rumors said, the shell covering the behemoth was unbelievably hard, negating all of the slashing attacks. Even though its whole body was covered by the shell, the behemoth was still able to move with amazing speed. Just ten Silhouette Knights wouldn't be able to buy time and would be in danger of being wiped out by the behemoth. The surviving pilots felt an unspeakable terror run down their spines, this was indeed a battalion-level demon beast. The captain of the Silhouette Knights made a snap decision.

“Arlo, Benjamin, Claes! Are you still alive?”

“...Yes sir!”

The behemoth went on a rampage again, slamming its body into the fortress with the force that it used to charge at the Karrdators. The stone-made stronghold was falling apart, it wouldn't last much longer.

“Arlo evacuate all the people who are still alive and run to Carriere Fortress! Benjamin alert all the neighboring cities that the behemoth is nearby, and rush to Jantunen! Claes, make for the capital! Run at top speed, run till you grind the crystal tissue to dust, you must report this to the capital!”

The captain turned the head of his machine and looked at his remaining subordinates.

“The rest of you... Sorry, you drew the short straw.”

The three pilots belonged to the younger generation, the reason behind their nominations were unknown, but they had no authority to refuse or hesitate. The top priority was to stay alive and deliver the warnings, there was no time for them to bid farewell. A tinge of sadness flashed across their faces, but they regained their spirit through determination and their sense of duty.

“Go!”

“Yes, sir!”

The young pilots left the front lines on their Karrdators without hesitation. After the captain confirmed the situation through his holo monitor, the corner of his lips rose in a smile.

“My brothers, we will be knocked away if we stay in this cramped space! We are abandoning the stronghold. Go outside and use stalling tactics!”

“Hey hey, we won’t let you come into our kingdom!”

“Let’s show this damn tortoise what we’re made of!”

The five Karrdators escaped from the stronghold, preparing to fight the behemoth. This was a hopeless battle, but their movements were clean and crisp. The behemoth razed the stronghold to the ground and started its attack again. The Karrdators used a series of coordinated attacks to impede its advance, but the ranged magic attacks cast at random couldn’t stop the movement of the giant beast. They would need to use melee attacks eventually, striking the head and legs before running away. The hit and run tactics were repeated again and again. The Karrdators could only focus on dodging the enraged behemoth as they fought on.

But even Silhouette Knights had a limit to their energy.

Silhouette Knights were equipped with ether reactors, a semi-

automatic part that supplied mana by absorbing the ether in the atmosphere. But the supply rate was limited. Especially in battle, if the usage rate was higher than the supply rate, the mana reserves in the machine would gradually get smaller. The pilots were only human—both man and machine had their limits. With the depletion of the mana reserves, the sluggish Karrdators were sent flying. The loss of focus due to fatigue caused the Karrdators to miss the chances to evade and were smashed by a tail attack. One by one, the knights fell to the demon beast.

But the five Silhouette Knights managed to buy a few hours of time that were more precious than gold, while facing off a battalion-level demon beast. It was only right to see this as the victory of their iron will.

The one who held on to the very end was the veteran captain. The machine was full of countless scratches, the right hand was blown away by the swipe of the behemoth's tail. The crystal tissue was in tatters due to damage as well as wear and tear, the mana reserve was on its last legs, he couldn't even run away.

“...The rookies have escaped... This fucking turtle, next up won't be a half-ass group like us, but a standard order of knights. Prepare to be history.”

Since he couldn't escape, the captain commanded the damaged machine to run. He never thought he would survive, injecting his remaining mana into his command Silhouette Knight and charging at the behemoth recklessly. But the best it could do was stagger forward in awkward steps. He tightened the grip of the sword in the left arm and threw the whole weight of the machine in a stab at the face of the behemoth.

Maybe the demon beast knew the concept of respect.

The behemoth locked on to the last enemy blocking its path, opened its mouth and took a deep breath. This was a never before seen attack. After a beat, just before the sword of the command Silhouette Knight reached the behemoth, a tornado breath powered by magic spewed from the behemoth's mouth. The fierce wind uprooted the trees. The command Silhouette Knight took a direct hit and was blown far away, the crystal shards and pieces of armor raining over the forest.

The behemoth growled. The squad launched many attacks in their stalling tactic, and with the command Silhouette Knight's last blow, a faint crack was left upon the behemoth's face, lightly scratching the eyeball. If the damage of the command Silhouette Knight wasn't so severe, it might have hit the eyeball. The behemoth surveyed the area for a while and started advancing after making sure those in its way were gone. Its footfalls were heavy and its eyes bore no sign of emotion.

The largest demon beast calamity since the founding of Fremmevira started quietly. What was its goal? The answer lay in the road the demon beast was heading down, the largest city of central Fremmevira—Jantunen.

Chapter 6: Let's go on a field trip

—CE 1277.

The 12-year-old Ernesti Echevarria and his childhood friends, the twins Archid Olter and Adeltrud Olter had moved on to middle school of the knighthood department. Their other childhood playmate, the Dwarf Batson Termonen, remained in the engineering department. Due to the influence of Eru, Batson had shown interest in the career of a Knightsmith. The two of them could sometimes be seen together, talking about Silhouette Knight design and operational knowledge.

As for Ernesti, he had been taking classes about Silhouette Knights but unrelated to knighthood ever since he enrolled in Laihiala Pilot Academy. Eru had completed all the courses in the engineering department after attending their classes for 3 years. After satisfying his thirst for knowledge with them, he was now unofficially attending pilot school classes.

Since Laihiala was a 'pilot' academy, the pilot school was the star of the institute. Only the best graduates from the Knighthood middle school would gain entry into the piloting department. Although it was known generally as the pilot school, but not everyone enrolled here had a knighthood background. A Knight Runner alone wouldn't be able to move the Silhouette Knight, it was still a machine that required crews to maintain and service it.

The pilots would learn about controls and maneuvering. The engineers learned to construct and maintain the outer skin as well as the inner skeleton. The alchemists trained in the art of crystal tissue creation and repair. The sigilmancers focused on the preparation of the Silhouette Arms. The various departments in middle school were collectively known as the pilot school in high

school.

With this background, the education policy of the pilot academy trended toward practical application. They familiarized themselves with the skills and techniques by piloting the Silhouette Knights owned by the academy. Laihiala Pilot Academy possessed 20 Silhouette Knights, a number that was more than adequate to man a fortified outpost on the front lines. But they were the retired models, the Salodrea machines, that were second-rate in ability.

These Silhouette Knights had been repaired countless times over the long years and each of them were used by several piloting candidates for training. The repeated usage had worn down the machines and it required frequent maintenance checks, a heavy burden on the students, but also a great experience for real-world application. Organizations hiring pilot school alumni commented that the fresh graduates had the ability to work on the front lines immediately.

On the training grounds of Laihiala Pilot Academy, a mock battle between Silhouette Knights was ongoing.

In the middle of the building made from stone, a red machine was engaged in battle with a white machine. They had blunt swords used for training spars in their hands, battling fiercely. The machines provided by the school had reinforced armor around the pilot seats, a design which focused on the safety of the pilots. But a Silhouette Knight going all out was still very dangerous, so the equipment was nerfed to restrict its damage. Standard equipment was only used in practical training battles against demon beasts.

There were no empty seats on the wall surrounding the arena. All sorts of people were watching the dueling Silhouette Knights from the spectator seats. Training with only brawls was not real training; the analysis of the fight was indispensable. There were people recording the battle logs, studying the skills of the pilots—some were allocating spare maintenance parts as the damage piled on; some of them were observing the effects of the magic arsenals.

Most of the people present were high school students, but there was a small figure that was out of place here. Not only was the person short, he also had a cute face that was easily mistaken for a girl. That person was Ernesti. Because his stature was small, he

was occupying the front seat so his vision wouldn't be obscured by others, staring at the Silhouette Knights intensely.

He skipped the knighthood department classes he was supposed to attend, overcoming all obstacles to earn the right to be exempted. He was unorthodox in his actions, but was strangely law-abiding in some areas.

In the beginning, Eru used his cute appearance and mascot-like feel to gain entry. He was planning to watch quietly from the side, but he was now observing the battles and repairs up close, finding more places he could chip in. From the way he could easily keep up with the conversations of his upperclassmen, his preparation in the last 3 years did not go to waste.

Getting practical first-hand experience and knowledge outside the classroom made Eru extremely happy. Apart from greedily taking part in all sorts of work processes, he was very interested in the training battles. The Silhouette Knights—giant robots fighting before his eyes drew out indescribable emotions within him. The giant machines that emulated a knight in armor bashed at each other with iron limbs wielding mammoth swords, even shooting powerful projectile spells. Eru observed the training battles with passionate eyes, not missing any single movement.

Side-tracking a bit, there was a rumor that a guy was almost pulled into a twisted world after seeing the pretty boy who could be mistaken for a girl blushing while watching the Silhouette Knights with longing eyes.

“Eh, seems like Di will lose again.”

Pilot school student—Helvi Öberg—mumbled as she recorded the battle logs, a breeze blowing across the arena messing up her short and curly hair.

The situation of the battle before them was clear, the red knight was struggling. Its dual-wielding blades on the offensive, but it didn't break through the white knight's defense.

“Hmm, what do you think about this battle, Eru?”

Helvi who has been glancing at the data in her hands asked Eru who was sitting obediently beside her. Their sights remained fixed on the arena at all times.

“The speed of Guyale’s sword is slower than before. I think that is the reason he missed the opportunity to score points off attacks.”

“...I see. Now that you mentioned it, his attacks seem too casual. I thought the condition of the Knight Runner was not too good. What went wrong?”

“The movement of the right arm seems sluggish. I think it is because the joints or crystal tissues have been replaced.”

Helvi browsed through the documents in her hand and confirmed the maintenance report of the red machine named Guyale. The record stated, due to signs of stress and fatigue in the crystal tissues of the right arm, it had been replaced this morning. The movement probably seemed rigid because the parts were not aligned. She found the reason behind the sluggish actions of Guyale, but she couldn’t tell that that the condition of the right arm was bad. Helvi moaned at Eru’s passion and attention to detail when watching training battles being better than those actively engaged in it. She found it amazing and wondered where his passion stemmed from. The white machine fighting Guyale in the arena, Earlecumber, fended off the attack and stabbed at the Guyale’s chest. The horn sounded, signaling the end of the battle. The instructor judged that the spar has been won by Earlecumber. Guyale couldn’t overcome its bad condition in this battle.

The machine that was battling just now entered the workshop situated near the arena and the pilots exited the Silhouette Knights.

The pilot of the white Earlecumber was Edgar C. Blanche, a tall and dignified man. Similar to his appearance, he was mature and steadfast, an elite among the pilots.

The red Guyale was manned by Dietrich Cunitz. Unlike Edgar, he had long blond hair, a meek and skinny man. His abilities were top notch, but he tended to get nervous and lost his head easily over small issues, his performance was inconsistent. He seemed frustrated because he lost the match.

He started squabbling with the maintenance crew the moment he got off the machine. Instead of discussing the issue, they were pushing the blame of the loss around, even the bystanders knew they wouldn't make any headway. Helvi couldn't stand it and butted in. She explained her findings about the arms to settle this meaningless quarrel. But Dietrich's expression lit up midway and smiled sarcastically. In contrast, the maintenance crew looked annoyed.

“Oh, no wonder the movement is so rigid. Maintenance is skimping on the repairs.”

Dietrich was suggesting ‘losing is not my fault’. Edgar standing nearby advised him sternly:

“Di, that's going too far. If the arm is not functioning well, you should adopt a different style in your fight. It's fine if you lose after trying that out, but your movements seemed unfocused today. It is not right to blame it all on the maintenance crew.”

Dietrich's sarcastic smile disappeared after being lectured in front of everyone.

“You only won because my machine's performance is sub-par, don't get cocky.”

“The content of the spar is more important than winning. I am just saying that you should reflect on that.”

“Is that so? Why don't you operate a faulty machine in our fight next time?”



Dietrich left in angry strides after uttering these words with a sour face. The people in the workshop had gotten used to this and simply shrugged. Eru who was watching from the sidelines made a perplexed face and Helvi patted his head for some reason. The school bell rang, announcing the end of class and to start preparing for the next lesson. Eru was unhappy that the fun time was over, but still bowed to Helvi and rushed back to the knighthood department.

“Field trip?”

Eru had no idea what his classmates in middle school were

talking about, there seemed to be some kind of event. He must have missed something if the whole class was talking about it. Probably because he was spending so much time at the pilot school.

“I’m sorry, I have no idea. Can you tell me what this is about?”

Eru said with a troubled expression. His classmates looked at each other for an instant, and all of them started explaining at the same time. Maybe they enjoyed talking to Eru, or they felt excited when speaking with Eru. It required tremendous patience to summarize the jumbled contents, but it could be filtered down to these main points.

—In order to accumulate practical experience in fighting demon beasts, all third years of the Knighthood middle school would be participating in a field trip.

—The destination would be the region of Jantunen, the forested hilly home to small demon beasts.

—The first years would be focusing on the basics of camping and wilderness survival skills.

—For safety, the pilot school would be sending several Silhouette Knights as escorts.

“I see, it will be conducted 2 weeks from now.”

“Hey, did you only find out about it today?”

“That’s what I thought. You keep going~~ to high school right? You didn’t come~~ back much anyway.”

Eru tilted his head, perplexed. Chid seemed shocked, but Ady looked unhappy. Eru had been reporting to the pilot school during class and after class, the time he spent training with Chid and Ady had been dwindling.

“Ady? Are you in a bad mood?”

“Not~~ really. Totally not. You are mistaken right?”

But the way Ady was crossing her arms and her strong tone seemed to be announcing ‘I am very unhappy’.

“I don’t think I did anything wrong. What did I do?”

“That’s right~~ you didn’t do anything. You are not here most of the time anyway~~”

This was what a hopeless situation meant. Eru had no idea what to do and requested Chid for help with his gaze. Chid seemed to acknowledge that and changed the topic forcefully.

“We will split into teams for the field trip. Eru, which group are you joining?”

“Ah, about this...”

Eru glanced at Ady who couldn’t hide her curiosity and said:

“If there are no special arrangements, I would prefer forming a group with the 3 of us. From the sound of it, the first years will be concentrating on the basics, so grouping up casually should be fine.”

“Oh—we will be staying together then...”

Ady’s mood had obviously turned better. She went behind Eru and put her arms around his neck in a hug like usual.

‘No matter how old I am, I just don’t get women...’

Including the memories from his past life, Eru looked at Ady with his wealth of life experience and felt a chill. About 2 weeks later, Ernesti and the others prepared to go on their field trip under the clear blue skies.

Large communal horse-drawn carriages were parked in front of Laihiala Pilot Academy. The middle school students loaded onto the carriages under the direction of the instructors.

“Take care of yourself—”

Batson from engineering department was not participating in the field trip. The knighthood trio walked toward the carriage after Batson bidden them farewell in a nonchalant tone.

“Eru Eru, this way!”

“Don’t rush; the carriage won’t leave without us.”

The destination of the field trip was a place called the ‘Cloquet’s Forest’. That place was covered in forests and was slightly elevated, filled with demon beasts that were relatively weak. Carriages were used for the long trip after considering the power level of the demon beasts. Cloquet’s Forest was a suitable place that met the requirement of the field trip. According to the planned route, they would swing by Jantunen to resupply before heading into Cloquet’s Forest which was nearby.

After all the students were seated, the carriages set off one by one. The long caravan of carriages advanced steadily on the road.

The ten Silhouette Knight escorts were spread out along the convoy. They were piloted by the high schoolers from the academy. The dark red and pure white machines, Guyale and Earlecumber were here too.

The Silhouette Knights used by the academy were donated from the military. After the long years of maintenance by the students with free reign, their shapes had become unique and interesting. Some had meaningless and complicated patterns engraved on their armor, others had eerily big accessories added onto the head, and there were armor that were pieced together in a weird pattern. The machines had been customized deeply, giving a ‘that’s too exaggerated’ kind of feeling. The exoskeletons came in all sorts of colors, having an elegant air about them instead of being fierce and mean.

There were many knighthood majors participating in the field trip. Although middle school was full of kids, they were still candidates striving to become knights, so there shouldn’t be any problem if they met normal demon beast attacks. Even if this was a field trip, they couldn’t be spooked by small demon beasts. Within the Kingdom of Fremmevira, mid-sized demon beasts about a dozen meters still lurked in the forest and mountain regions, and they

might run into them on the road. The Silhouette Knights were the insurance against unexpected attacks.

“I thought we would have a chance to fight demon beasts, but it turns out to be a boring trip.”

Dietrich Cunitz who was riding in Guyale complained loudly. Although they were here as a safeguard, there had been no major incidents on this road for the past several years. Although the Knight Runners had been assigned the mission of ‘long-distance maneuver training’, this was a trip that had nothing to do with tension or motivation.

“Hey, I know how you feel Di, but you can’t say such things.”

Helvi Öberg who was piloting the Silhouette Knight ‘Trandorches’ instead of working as a battle logger reminded him. There were microphones inside the pilot seat, the sound inside would be broadcast loudly through external speakers if it was not turned off. It was amplified to ensure the message was not drowned out by the noise of the Silhouette Knights in operation, so it was possible that a middle schooler might have heard him.

“Both of you take this seriously. Even if nothing happens, this is still part of the training.”

Earlecumber caught up to Guyale and Trandorches, the voice of Edgar C. Blanche can be heard booming from the Silhouette Knight.

“As expected from the top pilot, such high-end content.”

“Di, didn’t you hear what I said?”

“Ah—keep it down you two, everyone can hear you.”

Guyale and Earlecumber fell silent after hearing Helvi and returned to their positions. Helvi felt uneasy about the days ahead while she piloted Trandorches.

They were not the only ones who didn’t know how to kill time.

“I know it can’t be helped, but this is too boring.”

After rocking in the carriage for about half a day, Chid was bored out of his mind. Not only Chid, the students around him were feeling the same. They were 4 days away from the destination, and with their transportation taken care of by the carriages, the students on board had lots of free time. They could talk freely, but they were growing tired of the cramped space on the carriage, which couldn’t be helped.

“Do you want to look at the scenery outside? The scenery outside is interesting.”

“No, the only one who is satisfied watching the scenery is you. And you are really tenacious, how long do you plan to watch that?”

Chid looks at Eru with tired eyes. Eru stopped gazing at the scenery and turned back, sitting properly on his seat. He looked really cute with his head slightly tilted and deep in thought, relieving the atmosphere instantly.

“Want to read the books I brought along? I think you can kill some time this way.”

“Books... I want to stretch my body. Eh, never mind. What have you got?”

“Theories on Alchemy, Volume 1.”

“Is that a textbook? Isn’t it better to sleep then read that?”

“You are right, but there is really nothing to do here. Why not follow Ady and take a nap?”

Ady was sleeping soundly in front of Chid. Her peaceful face that had nothing to do with boredom made Chid looked to the sky. He maintained that position and suddenly thought of something.

“Eh, it’s a great way to kill time right?”

They climbed onto the top of the carriage. The top was full of

luggage of the students. Unlike the inside of the carriage, there were no seats here, but there were no problems sitting down.

“The scenery here is better.”

The carriage advanced leisurely under the clear blue skies, the top of the carriage felt nice and peaceful. A breeze made Eru’s silver hair sway. He found a nice seat among the luggage and entered scenery-appreciation mode.

“Ah—this is still boring. But it is nicer than the cramped inner carriage.”

Since there was nothing to do, napping under the sky sounded interesting. Chid didn’t care anymore.

“Ah, so you guys are here.”

Ady poked her head out from within the carriage.

“You woke up?”

“Yeah, you guys were gone when I got up.”

Ady made her way to Eru’s side as she spoke, and laid on his thigh, getting in position to sleep.

“The sun is so warm, it feels better sleeping here.”

“Sleeping is fine, but why are you using my lap as your pillow?”

“It feels nicer this way.”

As Eru was at a loss, Ady had begun her journey into dreamland. Eru couldn’t do anything about her and started reading, looking out at the scenery occasionally. Chid pondered about things for a while, but thinking it was too bothersome he gave up, using some luggage as a pillow to nap.

Their leisurely journey continued at this pace. After rocking

for 3 days on the horse-drawn carriages, the group from Laihiala Pilot Academy finally arrived at the largest city of central Fremmevira—Jantunen.

There was a reason why Jantunen ranked amongst the top cities in the kingdom. It lay along the route that led to the west of Fremmevira and beyond the Aubigne Mountain Range. It was also the transit point for supplies leading to the front line fortresses to the east of Fremmevira. As an important transport hub, its defenses were second only to the capital, surrounded by siege walls and moats. On top of that, there was a large band of knights equivalent to a company (100 Silhouette Knights) garrisoned here. No matter how crucial this city was, this was too much military strength for one city. But they were stationed here because of Jantunen's strategic location, allowing them to reinforce front-line cities quickly. And in practice, about 30 percent of the forces would receive patrol and escort missions outside the city.

By the time the convoy from Laihiala Pilot Academy arrived at Jantunen, it was already past noon.

The city wall surrounding Jantunen was colossal in scale. Because of the existence of demon beasts, traveling long distances was difficult, so this was the first time seeing another big city other than Laihiala for many of the students. Everyone was curious about the city and this is the most anticipated part for many of them.

“What an amazing wall, what are they defending against?”

“The enemy they have in mind are demon beasts...or rather, the demon beasts during the nation's founding. There were many more vicious demon beasts during that era.”

“Oh... That's why it is so massive.”

The students were elated when they saw the gate leading into the city. But the carriages did not pass through the gates, but were gathered in the open space in front of it.

“Wait, aren't we going into Jantunen?”

“They already told us that the stop at Jantunen was only to

resupply.”

Although the group could disembark and rest outside the carriages, they still needed to move out once the goods had been loaded. The students who thought they could get a reprieve from the dull journey started to complain, the twins stared at the gargantuan gate and nagged.

“Man, this is boring. It won’t do any harm letting us in for a while!”

“That’s right, I want to go shopping.”

“Wait, that’s not why...”

“Don’t you want to take a look?”

“I am interested, but going on a tour with such a large group of students can turn into a horrible mess.”

As they spoke, Eru looked to the side. It was probably arranged ahead of time, the merchants came out of the gate with the goods which were then loaded onto the carriages.

The short break was over and it was time to go. The carriages left with the reluctant students on board and move toward their destination—Cloquet’s Forest.



After traveling for a day from Jantunen, they reached

Cloquet's Forest. The road that led to the east of the kingdom was poorly maintained. After rocking in the carriages for the whole day, they finally reached the entrance of a thick forest.

The caravan parked in an open space near the entrance of the forest, the base camp for annual field trips.

The students started setting up tents under the command of the instructors. They had been sleeping on the carriages on their journey here, ready to escape in a moment's notice if demon beasts attacked. But they would be training for several days here and couldn't stay on the carriages indefinitely. So they erected tents and used this base as a campsite.

The upperclassmen experienced this several times and set up their tents skillfully. In the knighthood department, besides normal training, camping trips were also conducted once in a while. Since they aspired to be knights, setting up camps was a necessary skill when traveling in an army. Learning skills other than swordplay and magic was a unique feature of those majoring in knighthood. But it was not easy for the first years. Although they learned and practiced before the trip, their inexperience still showed in their work. Even with the assistance of the instructors, there were a few teams that slowed down progress, so dinner was served very late.

The entrance of the forest was filled with tents just like a camping zone. There were torches all around, illuminating the dark corners of the forest. As part of their training program, the second years were assigned guard and patrol duties. With so many charges, the instructors couldn't take care of everyone, so the students were also posted as guards, which served as practical assignments too.

Eru's team set up their tents faster than the other groups. Eru knew the steps well, and with the tall twins helping, they finished in no time. The two of them helped the other groups after finishing while Eru walked to the outer edge of the campsite.

'The basics are all done. I am not being lazy...ah, found it.'

Beside the camping grounds of the middle school were the base of the high school Knight Runners and their Silhouette Knights. The footsteps of the Silhouette Knights and the hum of their internal components would disrupt the sleep of the campers.

That was why they were stationed here in case of any emergencies.

The ten Silhouette Knights were arranged in rows, in standby mode with one knee on the ground. Their colossal figures were partially illuminated by the campfire. With some parts hidden in the darkness, they looked more imposing in the night. Normal people might feel intimidated, but Eru simply smiled as he looked at the rows of iron giants kneeling in a row.

‘Ah, giant robots are great—this is the oasis of the heart, every home should have one.’

There were no such terrifying families even in this world. But regretfully, no one was around to retort at Eru.

“Hey, you there...silver hair? Is that Ernesti?”

After a short moment, someone called out to Eru who was immersed in a mysterious healing aura of robots. He turned back and saw the owner of Earlecumber—Edgar.

“Evening Edgar-senpai. Sorry for disturbing.”

“So it is you. Why are... I guess it is pointless to ask.”

Eru was famous in the pilot school. His antics and motivation were well known too.

“Is Senpai on standby duty?”

Edgar heard Eru’s query as the flickering light from the campfire shined over them. He smiled bitterly and shook his head.

“No, we were deciding the order of the duty but...*sigh*, Di is making a scene as usual.”

“Dietrich-senpai?”

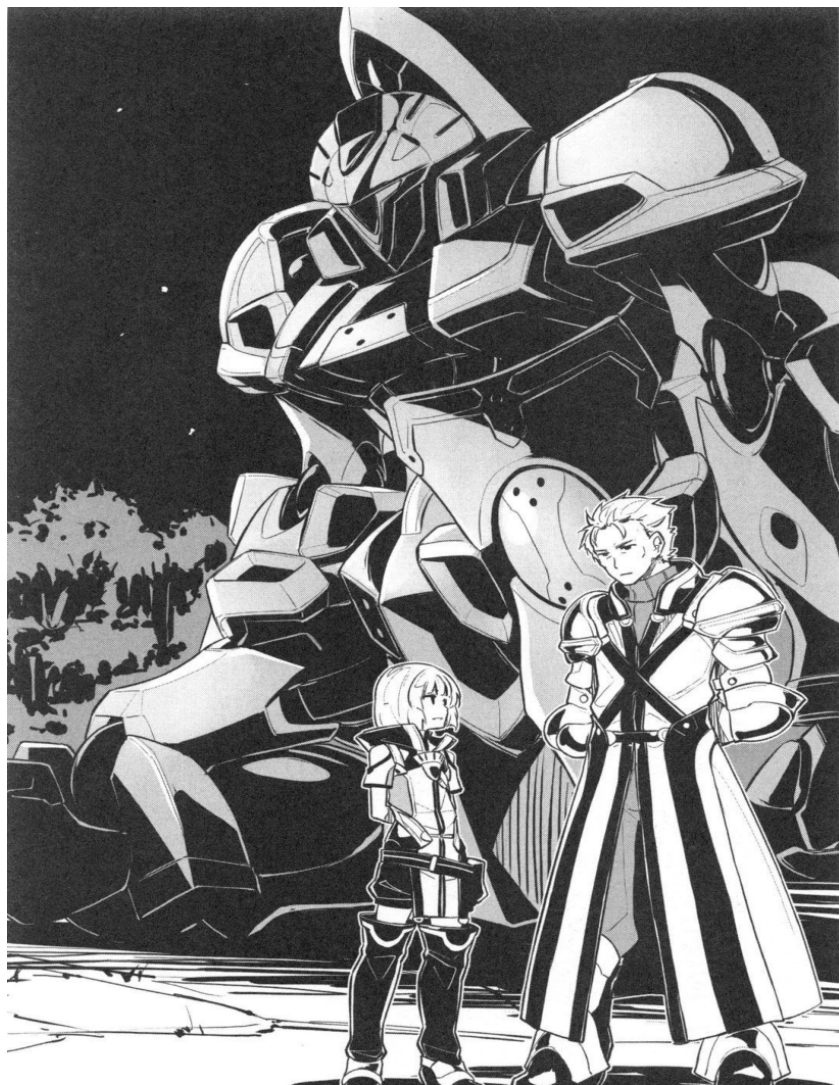
“Yes. Simply put, he was complaining about standby duty being a hassle. As Knight Runners in their third year of Laihiala Academy, protecting our juniors is an important mission... But as

usual, his attitude is flippant.”

He still had to carry out his task no matter how stubborn he was. But Dietrich still insisted on nagging about it.

“I don’t want to hear his complaints, so I decided to change the mood and see these guys.”

The two of them raised their heads to look at ‘them’. The campfire lit up the giant knight in white armor—Silhouette Knight Earlecumber. It was not customized and retained its original shape. Its simple design had no special features and had a gentle feel about it. With the top pilot Edgar controlling it, the two partners were known as the strongest in the pilot school.



“Senpai likes Silhouette Knights too?”

“Eh? Rather than like...they are my weapons and comrades. My mood will calm down when I am with them. When I feel frustrated like just now or when I feel tired, I will visit them.”

‘I am probably not suited for these sorts of talks’—Edgar scratched his head.

“I think having a reliable companion is wonderful.”

“You really like Silhouette Knights. That’s right, if you

continue to work hard as a knight, you will gain a partner too... Ah, we chatted for too long, first years should get back before it gets too late.”

And so, they bid their farewell and returned.

“...Okay, Di should have calmed down by now.”

After watching the bright silver disappear into the darkness, Edgar mumbled to himself and prepared to head back with the spirit of heading into battle.



The sky was totally dark. The first years finished their late dinner in the dim lights and returned to their tents. The first years had no assignments for the night. After the long journey and setting up camp, fatigue set in and they wrapped themselves in their blankets and slept. When they had gone into slumber—

A loud howl from a beast came from deep within the forest. They were probably wolves. After the first howl, howls in response could be heard from all over the forest. The students on guard duty heightened their senses and looked toward the forest. The howls could be heard every now and then, so they lost interest in it after a while. But there were some who can't ignore the howls. It reminded the first-timers the situation they were in. This was not a safe town or a carriage they could run away on. This was right in front of the forest where demon beast lurked, they were sleeping in tents that were erected here.

Even though Cloquet's Forest was not really dangerous, it was not considered safe even with the students on watch. After arriving here without incident, they felt the atmosphere was light along the way here, but grew tense because of that howling. Their sleepiness due to fatigue was gone and they were wide awake.

In Eru's team tent, Chid was shaking his head while lying down. Although he was not affected much, Chid still felt a bit uneasy and couldn't sleep.

'I thought I was braver than this, seems like I am quite tense too.'

The dim campfire shone in, giving the dark tent an unsettling atmosphere. Chid suddenly wondered if Eru sleeping beside him was uneasy like him and called out softly.

"Hey Eru, I want to ask... Eh."

Eru was fast asleep. Eru was not totally unmoved, but he was a warrior on the front line of hell in his previous life too. He understood the importance of rest even if he didn't want to, and gained the ability to be able to sleep under any circumstances.

'...Although I have known from the beginning, but he is too strong and carefree.'

After hearing Chid, Ady who couldn't sleep turned and stared at Eru's sleeping face.

"Eh, how cunning."

Chid didn't know what she meant by cunning. Ady shifted over and pulled Eru into her arms, hugging him like a pillow. Eru woke after being hugged this way. He realized it was Ady, patted her head and fell asleep. Maybe Ady felt safe because of this and her breathing turned smooth after a moment. Looking at the two of them, Chid felt foolish for not being able to sleep.

'Isn't it stupid for me to be tense alone?'

That was it, he decided to not worry anymore. After a while, he entered dreamland.

The next morning, the students started getting up sometime after dawn.

A lot of students didn't get enough sleep. In the sleepy atmosphere, Eru's group was refreshed. There were always students who couldn't sleep when camping, experiencing this tension was one of the objectives of this field trip. The instructors didn't push the weaker first years, so their tasks were rather relaxed. After the students finished the simple breakfast made from preserved food, they gathered by their school year under the commands of the teachers.

After the teacher gave brief instructions, the second years broke into teams and headed for the depths of the forest. The prime objective of this field trip was to engage in practical battle with the demon beasts lurking in the forest, and to hunt for a certain number of them. The first years would head to the outer region of the forest, and might have to fight if necessary.

The first years were tense as they enter the forest for the first time, while the higher grades bear a different sort of tension as they head into the forest. After a moment, the sound of their armor grows softer as they move further in and the forest turns quiet once again.

And so, this long day that all students in the knighthood department will never forget begins.

Chapter 7: Let's fight a demon beast

A physical phenomenon formed out of thin air with a screech and flew toward the 'Staccato Lizard'. The spell 'Aero Ripper' sliced through the Staccato Lizard's neck, killing it before it could scream.

"A lizard is heading this way! Vanguard, ready your shields!"

The group followed the clear command of the lady, students lightly equipped with wands and bows retreated to the rear, replaced by students in heavy armor. They formed a row and then a wall with their shields to fend off the swarming demon beasts. The beasts that survived the onslaught of magic and arrows pounced on the students in the front row with a fierce collision. The students used their shields to repel the claws and fangs of the demon beasts and counterattacked with their swords, taking down a large number of beasts.

But the demon beasts used their superior numbers to bypass the iron wall defense and aimed at their rear. The lightly armored students standing behind the vanguards would attack when they saw any beast slip past the defenses. No demon beast would make it through this formation.

The middle school students that split into groups when they entered Cloquet's Forest gathered and formed into a single unit, positioning themselves into a formation that focused on defense. The surge of demonic beasts charged at them from the depths of the forest. The students took on the waves of demon beasts courageously.

They put down one demon beast after another, but the torrent of demon beasts was just the tip of the iceberg. Some beast slipped through the defenses from the edge of the formation and filed

toward the forest entrance.

“If this goes on, the first years at the forest entrance will be attacked...! We have to warn them!”

The female student in command realized the danger and wanted to warn the group behind them, but they had another impending crisis.

“Watch out! A Macehead Ogre is coming at us!”

The student that saw the ogre screamed. They were warding off small-sized enemies like Staccato Lizards and Saber Cats, which were manageable despite their troubling numbers. But a Macehead Ogre was a different matter. Similar to its name, a Macehead Ogre was a 3-meter tall giant ape with a head full of short and thick horns¹³. It required the teamwork of several students to fight on par with one of them. They couldn’t take on this enemy while engaging the horde of small demon beasts.

“...! Second file! Aim for the ape’s legs! It will be bad if it draws near!”

Several staves stuck out from the students acting as the defensive wall, casting all sorts of spells. They used fire, wind and lightning magic to battle the demon beasts.

You needed to turn back time a few hours to understand why the situation was so dire.

Morning, the middle school students from higher years headed into Cloquet’s Forest in teams with high spirits. They kept their guards up, advancing deep into the forest with no resistance and realized that something was wrong. Normally, they would have met with several demon beasts attacking this deep into the forest, but there had been nothing so far. There was no news of demon beasts disappearing from Cloquet’s Forest.

The groups hesitantly loitered around the forest, attempting to reach other teams for news. But all of the groups only reported the absence of demon beast encounters, with no sign of cats or lizards. Finding no trace of the things that should be there was an abnormal

sign, so the crowd decided to report back to the teachers after a short discussion.

As they were preparing to leave, the demon beast started to emerge from left and right. It was a bit of a hassle, but they still raised their arms to destroy the demon beasts.

1, 2—5—10—

When the demon beasts numbered in the dozens, the expressions on everyone changed. Seeing the state the forest was in, they understood that this was another abnormal event, differing from the one they experienced just now.

But thankfully they were all gathered so they had strength in numbers, a silver lining in this gloomy situation. With their years of experience in knighthood combat training, the students formed ranks with a formation made for large groups. This was the result of the students who aspired to join an order of knights, displaying the fruits of their hard work. And thus, their group clashed head-on with the swarm of demon beasts and bringing us to the present moment.

This was the tenth Macehead Ogre they had defeated.

The tactic of prioritizing ranged attack was working. They judged that staying put would wear them down, so they retreated toward the forest entrance slowly.

It was fortunate that the student council president Stefania Serrati was present. When they split into team activities, she assigned tasks and suitable equipment to each group. It was the same for their combined formations, everyone had their role to play. Although they were a hastily formed group, things were going well. The problem was the lack of a commander. It was great just following their given tasks, but if they didn't act when there was an opportunity, they would miss the chance to take advantage of a situation and waste their resources.

Under these circumstances, no one objected when the student council president who was in her third year stepped up as the commander. She had the nominal title as well as the grades and was trusted by everyone. Even if this was a temporary group cobbled

together on a whim, her instructions were clear and led the group through difficult situations very well. Their retreat was orderly and casualties were low, but—

‘...This is bad. The number of demon beasts is a problem, but why are they so adamant about charging at us... How much longer can we hold them back?’

Stefania appeared calm when she gave commands, but she was frantic inside. They still had lots of stamina and mana, but they would be overwhelmed if this kept up.

‘We didn’t intercept all the demon beasts. I hope the children behind us are safe...!’

The situation was deteriorating, but they still fought on.

The first years training at the outer edge of the forest were attacked while the higher year students were battling.

In the beginning the students near to the forest screamed. Several Staccato Lizards pounced on the students and bit them. Their attacks weren’t fatal, but it was dangerous if a bunch of them struck together. The instructors rescued them immediately, attacking the demon beasts that was targeting the students.

From the end result, the instructors’ action made the situation worse, but they were not at fault. It would be fine if it was just a few demon beasts, but the demon beasts started to emerge en masse. The teachers missed the chance to fall back and had to keep fighting. They were holding up well, but the students behind them fell into a panic with the emergence of more demon beasts. The instructors who were supposed to maintain order couldn’t draw back and give the students the proper instructions.

The students recklessly waved their staves and cast spells. Their blindly cast magic did not threaten the beasts, almost hitting allies instead. Some drew their swords without thinking about others that were near them, causing further panic. Compared to the higher grade students who were prepared and equipped for battle, and had plenty of practical experience, the first years were not ready for a fight.

“...Aero Damned, Canister Shot!”

Suddenly, someone leapt over the panicking first years students. Silver hair shine brightly under the sun, this image burned deeply into the eyes of the confused students. That person flipped in midair, aimed for the ground and shot out several air bullets. Canister Shot meant casting several spells at the same time like a shotgun.

The air bullets hit the ground with the sound of explosions. The compressed air bullets squeezed the faces of the beasts together before blasting the demon beasts and the ground away.

The merciless magic destroyed a large amount of demon beasts through carpet bombing. Two more students moved in from the left and right. One of them charged into the demon beast crowd with a big bastard sword in hand. He used Physical Boost to swing his giant sword, slicing the demon beasts in half. He used the momentum to turn his body, drawing another weapon from his waist and point it at the surviving beasts.

“Too naive! Sonic Boom!”

This weapon—gun staff Gandiva—produced a vacuum from its tip, forming an air current rushing towards the demon beasts, hitting those that were outside his sword range. Their bodies twisted unnaturally and were blown away.

A girl showed up beside him, holding two bayonet staves pointed at different beasts.

“Riot Sparrow!”

Lightning fell, accompanied by the sound of thunder the next second, striking the gathered demon beasts. She didn't even look at the beasts that spasmed in death, attaching the gun staff onto the sword in her sheath. She held the compound swords in both hands, slashing at every demon beast that came within range. Even a thin sword could cut demon beasts in half if it was strengthened by magic.

The 3 students attacked like a storm, reducing the number of

beasts drastically. The pressure from the approaching swarm lessened, giving everyone a chance to catch their breaths. The students stopped moving not because of the chaos, but from the shock of seeing the one-sided massacre.

“Draw your staves.”

The short student who leapt over the crowd stood in front of them and issued an order. The young, tender voice that sounded as pleasant as a bird had an air of authority in it, making everyone follow his instructions.

“Everyone gather up, form into tight ranks. Teacher!”

The dumbfounded instructors finally came to their senses.

“Please take command and keep the initiative. Please retreat, the 3 of us will support the others.”

The teachers started giving out instructions in a hurry. The students formed a tight formation and strengthened their defenses. For first year students with inferior combat abilities to fight demon beasts, they would need to concentrate their firepower. Although it was still a bit flimsy, but the teachers commanding them could handle it.

Ernesti stared at the demon beasts rushing out of the forest and slowly raised his Winchester. Chid and Ady stood beside him like his guards. Chid leaned the bastard sword on his shoulder with one hand and grabbed a Gandiva with the other while Ady rested the tip of her dual sword in her hands on the ground. Their eyes were full of determination when they saw the swarm of demon beasts before them.

“Hey, aren’t these numbers a bit too much. Oh well, we can wreck havoc if more of them come!”

“Hmmp—I won’t hold back!”

Eru reigned in the spirited twins.

“It’s fine if the both of you want to fight, but don’t forget

about the rest of the student body.”

“Eh—? They can take care of themselves...probably...”

Ady wanted to protest, but stopped midway. Because Eru was staring at her with a stern face.

“You don’t need to stay here if you just want to wreck havoc.”

“Uguu, I...I get it! I will help them!”

Chid raised his hands in surrender.

“Fortunately, this is still the entrance of the forest. We can get back to the campsite if we retreat. If we link up with the Silhouette Knights there, things will lighten up. Before that...”

Eru cast an Aero Damned as he spoke. The demon beast that wanted to attack while they were talking was sent flying.

“We need to protect them.”

Eru made up his mind, lifted the Winchester and shot out a string of spells.



While the middle schoolers were in the forest, the high school Knight Runners were relieved from their duties and started their training. Since they could not increase the stress on the machines since the Silhouette Knights had to be conserved for escort duties,

so their training centered on man-to-man spars.

Edgar was in the midst of sword swinging practice when noises that shouldn't be heard appeared from the forest.

“Hey, isn't the forest rather noisy?”

“Hmm?”

The moment he brought it up, the students around him perked up their ears. Sounds of tremors that weren't there before came from the direction of the forest, and they knew what it was.

“That sound of explosions...magic!”

“Something is up... Exercise cease! Pilots prepare to sortie. The situation in the forest seems to be bad, scout it out!”

The group in the camp moved hurriedly. The Knightsmiths working on the Silhouette Knights withdrew to let the pilots mount on. They skipped the initialization checks and let the machines stand up, drowning the surroundings with the sound of the churning ether reactors. But they couldn't send all the machines out, so 5 Silhouette Knights were dispatched into the forest.

“Hey, look at that...”

The scale of the crisis was beyond their imagination. Swarms of demon beasts were charging at them before they entered the forest, the numbers were more than they had ever seen. The beasts shrieked as they charged in from all directions.

“What...What is happening?”

“The demon beasts are going out of control? Are the brats in trouble!?”

They drew their swords and advanced into the forest. They linked up with the first years in no time. The first years had successfully retreated with Eru's quick thinking.

The first years bundled together, retreating slowly as they cast magic to restrict the demon beasts' movements. The beasts that rushed at the formation would be repelled by magic. Edgar moved in to support them, piloting Earlecumber as a shield in front of them. The tense first years breathed sighs of relief when they saw the Silhouette Knights appear and dispose of the demon beasts. The strongest combat units of humanity—the Silhouette Knights—were trusted by the populace. Especially at the scene of a demon beasts' raid, their power to match a hundred demon beasts provided a great sense of security.

They retreated to the campsite, setting up fences around the area to fortify their defenses.

With the Silhouette Knights taking charge of defense, the instructors and the high school Knight Runners began to discuss their plan of action. There were enough defenses to protect the first years, so that wasn't an issue. Their main worry lay with the higher year students who delved deep into the forest.

“Do you know the routes taken by the second and third years?”

“That is hard to say. Because this was meant to be a practical session, the area of operation is the whole forest, and there is no guarantee they will stay in the assigned location.”

The instructors reviewed the action plan of each upperclassman and groaned with serious expressions. They wanted to rescue them, but with the limited number of Silhouette Knights, they wouldn't know where to start. Cloquet's Forest was vast, running around like a headless chicken would be counter intuitive. But they didn't have time to hesitate either. At this point, Ernesti stuck his head out from the instructors' side.

“Where are the places in the forest that can gather people easily?”

“Hmm? That...if they want to rendezvous, it should be nearby.”

The teacher was surprised by Eru's sudden question, but still

answered him. It was meaningless for a first year to discuss this with them, but with his spectacular performance earlier, no one felt out of place with Eru's intrusion.

"With the scale of the demon beast horde, won't the senpai group up to resist? That's why I think we should look for places where large groups of people can gather."

"Hmm... You have a point."

"The Silhouette Knights can't move smoothly in heavily forested areas. Taking our combat assets into consideration, we should start our search from open spaces, right?"

The map sprawled out on the table was marked with red lines showing the route of advancement. To reach the designated areas, they had to cut through the center of the forest.

"Also, you can take out the demon beasts coming this way if you use this route. If anyone is caught in a battle, just holler and you will be fine."

Because this was an emergency, everyone accepted Eru's proposal and formed a team to rescue the upperclassmen. The campsite needed guards, so only half of the machines were deployed—5 Silhouette Knights.

Edgar who was the pilot of the pure white Silhouette Knight—Earlecumber—was the first to volunteer. As he was entering Earlecumber, someone called out to him. Edgar turned back and saw Eru standing there.

"Can I go too?"

"Why?"

"The family members of my friends are also in the forest. They are worried, so I want to join the search if possible."

Edgar felt troubled. Although it was dangerous, it shouldn't be a problem with Eru's combat skills. And with the rational thinking he displayed during the conference, it would be helpful to bring

him along. Edgar agreed after thinking about it.

Earlecumber let Eru stand in his hand and stood up. Behind him was Helvi in Trandorches and 3 other machines. They entered the forest with heavy steps.



“Those who have depleted your mana help the wounded! Front row switch with standby row! Hold the line, everyone just hold on a little longer!”

Their mana was exhausted and they were panting hard. They tried to stabilize their breathing as they continued to defeat the unending torrent of demon beasts. The upperclassmen protected their wounded as they continued to retreat from the forest.

It had been several hours since the battle began, their retreat had been difficult. They were fine with handling the beasts one at a time, but when a huge wave swelled up and attacked, they were forced to deplete their stamina. The Macehead Ogres that showed up from time to time drained their mana. Because they couldn't cast powerful enough spells because of the lack of mana, a Macehead Ogre managed to close in on them and cause serious damage. About half of the group was in a state of mana depletion or had been wounded, their forces were dwindling. They conserved their remaining stamina and kept switching the vanguard to hold the up the battle front. But they didn't know how much longer they could last; they were close to the campsite, which was the only hope that kept them going.

But reality was cruel.

Two Macehead Ogres appeared dead ahead—They were so agitated that they were foaming at the mouth, charging straight at the group. Compared to the beginning, the magic at their disposal was much lower in grade, so the students couldn't stop them. The vanguards frowned. The sole Macehead Ogre that attacked earlier wiped out over a dozen students, inflicting heavy casualties. If they took on two at the same time, they might be wiped out.

Stefania who was in command knew this very well. On top of giving out commands, she had moved to the front line with her staff in hand. She had gone through all sorts of possibilities while fighting, but they didn't have the combat ability to break away from the encirclement. The group was reaching the limit of their physical and mana reserves. They couldn't muster the strength to defeat the ogres even if they wanted to.

The Macehead Ogre had an endurance that matched its tough appearance. They advanced steadily, making light of the desperate struggles of the students. The chaotic attacks served to agitate them instead, making them more excitable.

“This is it...”

Someone mumbled this softly. The Macehead Ogre that was right before them raised their fist, aiming for the head of a vanguard. The vanguard raised their shield, even though it was in vain.

That was why he didn't understand what happened when he heard the sound of a dull explosion over his head.

He didn't see several Piercing Lances flying over his head with incredible accuracy, hitting the arm of the Macehead Ogre dead-on. He also missed seeing the Piercing Lance exploding one by one in accordance to its script, blowing the ogre's arm away. By the time the vanguard composed himself, the ogre was running away yelping.

Following immediately was something that was beyond his imagination—the one which came flying wasn't just the magic projectile, but the caster himself—Ernesti—who rushed in like a silver bullet. This was a literal description, as Eru was conjuring ‘Aero Thrust’ to accelerate as he leapt, just like a bullet. He used the

momentum to catch up with the limping ogre that lost its arm, slashing off its head with a Sonic Blade. The head flew into the air and the massive body collapsed.

Eru landed with enough force to dig into the ground, turning his head as he slid and pointed his Winchester at the other Macehead Ogre. Fireball was rapidly cast from its tip, engulfing the ogre in the explosion that shook the ground. Half of the Ogre's body was charred and fell.

“Now...Now's the chance! Kill it!”

Stefania was stunned by Eru's sudden intrusion onto the battlefield, but she didn't let the chance slip away. Her command made the students move, finishing off the ogre.

“...Eru...”

“Sorry for the wait, Student Council President. I brought reliable reinforcements.”

Without needing Eru to show her, she could hear heavy footfalls from behind. The rescue team overtook the senior students, spreading out in front and protecting them.

The 10-meter high giant knights swung their gigantic iron swords, easily wiping out a wave of demon beasts, this was the overwhelming strength of humanity's strongest weapon. The students erupted in cheers at the sight of the powerful Silhouette Knights. There were no reinforcements more reassuring for the group on the verge of defeat. They were safe.

“...Well well, bringing Ernesti along was the right choice.”

Edgar who was riding inside Earlecumber mumbled to himself as he drove the demon beasts off.

They followed Eru's suggestion and searched places with wide open spaces. They discovered the senior students shortly after advancing in that direction. This was because the students were bunched together and ready to retreat. But they were in a critical situation when Edgar found them, the Macehead Ogres were about

to break through the formation. They could take down the demon beast easily with the Silhouette Knight's power, but they were too far away. They would also hit the students if they used Silhouette Arms.

Frustrated with his inability to help despite having the strength to do so, Edgar grinded his teeth in regret. At this moment, Ernesti who was on the hand of Earlecumber charged ahead. The ogres fell easily before the rampaging Eru, making Edgar sigh. His performance was shameful when compared to Eru.

With the Silhouette Knights that made it in the nick of time as escorts, the students continued to retreat. There were many injuries, but no one was lost and everybody made it back to the campsite in one piece.



This happened slightly after the Laihiala Pilot Academy student body left Jantunen for Cloquet's forest.

A Silhouette Knight passed by the convoy and arrived at the eastern gate of Jantunen. This was probably urgent as the exhausted Knight Runner approached the knights after reaching the gate. The knights were stunned by the sudden turn of events, but their faces turned pale after receiving the report of the pilot and hastily informed their commander.

“Is...that true!?”

The commander of Jantunen garrison knights—Philip

Hallhagen's expression changed after hearing the report from his subordinate. The vice commander Gottfried Hyvärinen who was also in the commander's office was expressionless, but his face was white. This showed the impact this report gave them.

"Yes sir! Stronghold Balguerie was decimated under the attack of the battalion-level demon beast—Land Emperor. It is likely the defending team has been wiped out. The behemoth is moving west into the heart of the kingdom, and is expected to show up around Jantunen soon. Sir!"

A battalion-level demon beast's sudden attack made Philip's head ache like a nightmare. But the commander had no time to waste. It was fortunate a Knight Runner brought this news to him, giving him some buffer time to prepare for the appearance of the behemoth. Every second was precious.

"Issue emergency orders, muster all the knights near Jantunen! This order overrides any mission they are currently undertaking!"

The orderly repeated his given orders, saluted and sprinted out immediately. Philip and Gottfried dashed out as if they were chasing after him and headed toward the war council room.

"A behemoth... Even Jantunen doesn't have a battalion, only the capital can match that."

"The categorization is only a guideline. Even with our forces, we can take it down if we are prepared for major losses."

Philip clenched his fist as he moved hurriedly.

"I know, but the problem is the scale of the losses! It's meaningless to blindly sacrifice the hundred Silhouette Knights in our garrison! Jantunen will be left defenseless!"

Gottfried was quiet after hearing this. He did not wish to risk the destruction of their company of knights, but the behemoth had already ravaged a stronghold. If Jantunen suffered heavy collateral damage, the trade routes of the kingdom would be heavily congested. If the supplies to the front lines were cut off, it would

adversely affect the fortresses, leading to more catastrophes. This could determine the fate of the entire nation, they had to kill the behemoth even if it took the lives of the entire knight company. Gottfried had to offer his consul if necessary, that was his duty as the vice commander.

“...No, there is no time to discuss this. If we don’t stop it here, the entire kingdom might fall. Send an envoy to the capital, they will need to send a replacement company of knights after we fall...”

Seeing Philip’s face twist with worry, Gottfried could only nod in silence.

All the knights on duty were already there when Philip entered the war council room. All of them wore anxious faces because of the impending crisis.

The knights outside the city received a call order, so they had to assess the situation before all the knights returned. A map was prepared, and the possible advancement route of behemoth was highlighted. The Knight Runner who sent the warning didn’t know the current position of behemoth either, so they had to use factors such as terrain and the mobility of the behemoth to predict its advancement route and estimate its rough position. They would also need to decide where they would fight the behemoth.

“From the direction it is heading and the terrain around Stronghold Balguerie, the most likely route is around the Aubigne Mountains, through the forest at the foot of the mountain.”

“That is right beside Jantunen... Its current estimated position?”

The knight who was asked pointed to the map.

“I think it passed through Crepel Plains and is about to enter Cloquet’s Forest.”

“Cloquet’s Forest... Uguu, that’s closer than I thought. If we are going to intercept, we will need to do it somewhere closer to Jantunen...”

A knight behind him suddenly shouted.

“Did you say Cloquet’s Forest...!?”

“What? What’s wrong with Cloquet’s Forest?”

No one wanted to listen to bad news, but they needed to keep tabs on elements that could affect them. Before the watchful eyes of everyone, the knight announce with a pale face.

“...Laihiala Academy is conducting a field trip there right now!”

“Wha...!?”

All the knights present were speechless. Not only Jantunen, even citizens who were the assets of the nation, as well as the children were in danger. There were knights in the room who had relatives studying in the Laihiala knighthood school right now. Some of the knights approached Philip frantically.

“We need to go to Cloquet’s forest!”

“We have to save the children!”

Philip was troubled with the piling concerns, but he did not consider it too long. Another mission took priority.

“...Send out messengers, but the company will stay put until we have gathered enough forces.”

“Commander! Are you forsaking them!?”

“Nonsense!”

Philip roared at the knights who were pestering him, his voice filled with anguish.

“I want to help them too, but with our current forces, we will need to give everything to take down the behemoth...! I am not optimistic about the coming battle. Striking now without mustering

the whole company will just be wasting our numbers, we might even be wiped out by the behemoth. Don't be mistaken! Our objective is to defeat the behemoth, defend Jantunen and safeguard the entire Fremmevira Kingdom!"

The rowdy knights quieted down. They also understood they had no say in this.

"...What we can do now is to have faith in their luck and wits..."

They looked into the darkness in the direction of Cloquet's Forest.

The entrance of Cloquet's Forest, Laihiala Knighthood school camp site.



After the upperclassmen in middle school retreated successfully, a simple fence was erected alongside the Silhouette Knights, forming a simple line of defense.

Most demon beasts emerging from the forest were about 1 meter in height, the largest being 3 meters tall. Their combat capability was insignificant compared to the 10-meter tall Silhouette Knights. They swatted away clusters of beasts with a single sword swing. But there were a few that snuck past because of the large difference in size. They swarmed toward the fence, and were held off by the students who moved in to fill the gap.

From the demon beasts' view point, the Silhouette Knights seeming to be flaunt their existence were intimidating. Unwilling to face them, the beasts flanked the Silhouette Knights, attacking the base camp from either side. The middle schoolers in the higher years suffered many casualties, so this was a favorable situation for the knighthood students who were lacking in manpower.

After the sun set beyond the mountains, the attacks came to an end. The students who were alert even with the absence of enemies instinctively felt that the battle was over and took a breather.

“Is the demon beast stampede over...?”

Stefania Serrati who felt fatigue from the depth of her heart was relieved. She was leading the able-bodied student body to the very end. They met up with the teachers back at the base camp, but they judged that it would be easier for Stefania who had been commanding from the very beginning to carry on. But part of it was because her sense of responsibility.

“Chid, Ady... Eru.”

With the situation calming down, she greeted the resting students and surveyed the campsite. She called out to the familiar faces loudly when she came across them.

“Ah, Onee-sama... Are you okay? I heard the student body was in trouble!”

Stefania shook her head.

“As you can see, I am doing well. Enough about me, you guys were reckless out there.”

Stefania's looked amazed as she spoke. The students who just retreated back to camp were riddled with wounds and fatigue, so their combat capabilities were minimal. They would struggle to handle the demon beasts that snuck past the Silhouette Knights in this state. But thanks to Eru buying time for them, they managed to recover and make it through.

“We were the only ones who could still fight, so we went a little overboard.”

“I think the 3 of you were as effective as a platoon, this is not going ‘a little overboard’... Hai, never mind. More importantly... Eru!”

Stefania approached Eru who was standing behind the two of them and hugged him. She didn’t care about Eru who was surprised and couldn’t resist, rubbing her face on that silky smooth head of hair.

“Ah~~ this healing♪~~ I can keep fighting if Eru is here.”

‘Stefania-senpai... Can’t be helped. I will give her some service for her hard work. If my sacrifice can improve her mood, it is nothing.’

Stefania happily played with his hair and poked his cheeks, but Eru did not resist, allowing her to toy with him. Ady seemed angry but didn’t stop her.

Stefania enjoyed herself with the cuddling for a long while. Suddenly an awkward voice called out to her from behind.

“Eh... Student Council President...”

The student was looking for her, but was surprised with how creepy Stefania was smiling. This was expected as Stefania was leading the student body impressively earlier, but was now hugging a junior with a lewd smile.

“What is it?”

“The teacher is asking for you to discuss our next move.”

“I understand. Sorry you three. Let’s chat later, it will just take a little while.”

It was too late to cover up, but Stefania didn’t seem to mind, changing to student council president mode immediately. The three of them waved at her with amazed expressions as Stefania left.

‘Alright, we tided over the dangerous period, but what’s next?’

They made it through the stampede of demon beasts, but Eru didn’t think things were over yet. He looked back at Cloquet’s Forest, which seemed to be growing darker as if it wanted to mask itself from Eru’s sight.

Even Eru was not sure what was lurking deep within the forest.



“And so, we are moving out tomorrow?”

The instructors were unable to come to a consensus for the next course of action. This was understandable as they had not grasped the whole situation at hand. Anyway, they had informed everyone of this course of action over dinner. Eru and the others drank the soup made from common vegetables and the food they brought along while they confirmed the circumstances.

“Correct, we have many wounded but no one is in danger of dying, the worst are just fractures. There are many who have depleted their mana and are exhausted. The teachers feel it is dangerous to move with our lack of fighting power.”

“Hai, isn’t it dangerous to rest here?”

“The horses will also be affected by the dark. The instructors decided that being attacked while moving exhausted on the carriages was too risky, it is better to wait for daybreak while

taking advantage of the base camp's defenses. I think we won't be attacked by demon beasts in such numbers any time soon."

"Oh—what an optimistic view."

"Not really, all the options are like a gamble, this is simply choosing the safest option. If something does come in the middle of the night, it will be easier for the Silhouette Knights to defend if we stay put."

What they could do now was to rest well, detect danger early and react to the situation. In the end, they had to depend on themselves. After dinner, they tried to relax and shake off their tense emotions, putting their hopes in making it to Jantunen in the morning.

But they missed an important thing—What created the stampede?

They didn't notice that the demon beasts heading their way were desperate, as if something was chasing them to the west.

They only regreted missing this detail during the twilight hours just before dawn.

The red sun rose slowly over the mountain range. The students that took the last shift suppressed their drowsiness and yawned. The surroundings were peaceful. After meeting the large-scale migrations of the demon beast, there were almost no demon beasts left in Cloquet's Forest. The whole forest seemed to have died with a silent air about it.

—And that silence was broken suddenly. They noticed the weird noises coming from the forest. The sound of trees breaking and falling appeared to follow a rhythm. Something heavy seemed to be hitting the ground. It didn't take long for them to understand what that meant, sounding the alarm immediately.

"Oh shit! A big one! A big one is coming!"

Both the instructors and students that were sleeping jumped out of bed when the alarm sounded. They didn't sleep well because

of the tension, so everyone was moving once they got up. The high school Knight Runners that were dragging their tired bodies to perform their standby duties mounted their Silhouette Knights, activating them immediately to guard the entrance to the forest.

The sound of trees falling could be heard clearly now along with the thundering footsteps. It was clear that something big was approaching.

“Hey, isn’t this bad?”

It went without saying that everyone could feel this was a crisis like never before. In this intense atmosphere, everyone’s eyes were drawn toward the forest entrance.

There were no demon beasts larger than duel-level in Cloquet’s Forest, the reason why it was chosen for the field trip. But the footfalls of the approaching beast was telling of how large it was.

A large demon beast that shouldn’t appear in Cloquet’s Forest. The swarms of demon beasts that attacked them out of nowhere.

The demon beast wave was so large as if the whole forest was rushing out. Could it be they were chased out by the intruding colossal beast?

The trees near the entrance fell like dominoes. Finally, the demon beast appeared with the light of the breaking dawn. It was covered in uneven armor with protruding edges. It was easily mistaken for a mountain and humanity’s strongest weapon, the Silhouette Knight, looked as weak as a child in contrast. Its eyes that were disproportionately small scanned the area before it.

Everyone was awestruck, feeling fearful and weak before its majesty. Land Emperor—the colossal beast that appeared at the border of the nation, was now advancing dangerously close to Jantunen.

An abnormal silence enclosed this space. It spurned the tension between the demon beast and the people present.

The humans on scene, Laihiala's students, were awed by the gargantuan-sized behemoth and couldn't move. The elite knights posted on the front lines were also stunned when they met the behemoth, it was too much to ask 15-year-old students to find enough courage to stand up to it.

During this moment when time seemed to freeze, the behemoth moved first with its calmer state of mind. It looked around, opened its mouth and howled. Instead of sound, it felt closer to a shock wave reverberating through the air. Its horrifying lung capacity released a roar that shook the earth, shattering several trees near to it. The armor of the Silhouette Knight closest to it shivered, taking a few steps backwards because of the pressure. The sound was so loud the students curled up into balls cupping their ears, some even fainted from the shock wave.

This was the signal that undid their bindings. When they started to move, the silence before was just like an illusion. Everyone was running away from the demon beast as if they were pushed back. This was not because they had come to their senses, but chaotic actions due to their state of panic. The instructors lost control of the situation, everyone was just focused on running away from the behemoth.

Escaping was the best option under such circumstances, but the way they were doing so was bad. The range a human could travel on foot was limited, they needed to run to the carriages if they wanted to escape further. The panic-stricken students didn't think about that and were just concentrating on getting away in any direction.

Just as the group was dispersing, there was suddenly an explosion to the front. No matter how terrified the people were, they wouldn't run into an explosion. The student body's movement stopped for an instant and a figure used this chance and jumped in front of everyone.

"Get away! Run! It's dangerous! Everyone head for the carriages!"

Following Eru's lead, the few students who kept their wits shot out Fireballs, preventing the group from spreading out. They attracted the attention of the students with spells, herding them

towards the carriage-like hunting guides. They were still far from being calm, but the group was stable enough to understand instructions. They ran toward the carriages in order to escape from the behemoth.

The middle schoolers were not the only ones awed by the behemoth, it was the same for the high school Knight Runners. Because they were in possession of the power of the Silhouette Knights, the behemoth was a bigger threat to them. With the responsibility that came with this power, they couldn't run away. Even if they wanted to fight, the enemy was too strong.

“Don't stop! Move—!”

Caught in a dilemma because of an enemy out of their league, the first to snap out of it was Edgar. Be it fight or flight, remaining still before the behemoth was suicidal.

The Knight Runners finally recognized the behemoth was preparing to charge and tried to evade in a panic. The momentum of the beast was incomparable to anything in this world. Even a Silhouette Knight wouldn't stand a chance before it. The pilots broke out in cold sweat, losing the will to fight. What could they do to battle this terrifying demon beast?

But one man, Edgar, suppressed his fear when he realized the advancement route of the behemoth coincided with the carriages the middle schoolers were using to flee and said with resolve:

“I will distract the behemoth! Everyone, please lend me your strength!”

“Huh? Edgar! Do you know what you are saying!? That is a behemoth! It will send all of us flying with a kick!”

“I know! But our kouhai will be wiped out if we let it rampage. No, not just that. It will assault Jantunen if it heads down the same way as the carriages!”

Helvi who snapped at Edgar knew too. There was nowhere to run even if they escaped from here, it would just lead to more collateral damage. She gritted her teeth with enough force to

splinter them.

“We have no choice but to go through with it...!”

“We are knights. We learn swordsmanship and piloting in order to protect our kingdom, how can we run without a fight!”

Edgar equipped some magic armament onto Earlecumber as he spoke. The ether reactor was running with the flow of mana, activating the magic armament—the whole Silhouette Knight glowed dimly.

“I don’t want to die pointlessly either. We need to draw the behemoth’s attention!”

“Hai, there’s no other way!”

Edgar didn’t want to lose the spirit he managed to squeeze out. Earlecumber led the charge, aiming at the behemoth’s leg.

“All units draw staves! Use magic bombardment to draw its attention and pull back!”

Edgar shouted as he pulled his control stick all the way back. Earlecumber channeled its mana to the magic armament under the control of its pilot, lightning staff Arquebus. The tip of the long, simple weapon glowed brightly, a lightning bolt struck at behemoth with a flash.

Unfortunately the blast had no effect. One reason was that the behemoth was too big, the other factor was that the electricity was directed to the ground from the armored shell without hurting the interior.

The other 3 Silhouette Knights apart from Edgar had also armed themselves with magic armaments, circling around the behemoth while firing their overt spells. It was hard to tell the effectiveness of the attacks, but they achieved their goal of getting the behemoth’s attention. The behemoth turned its head when it noticed the disturbance, looking at the Silhouette Knights casting spells at it with annoyed eyes.

“How... It is ineffective...”

“It’s fine! Don’t stop and run! We just need to buy some time!”

The Knight Runners understood the behemoth was focusing on them, so they lured the behemoth away from the middle schoolers and retreated at full speed.



As the high school pilots battled the behemoth, the middle schoolers were rushing onto the carriages.

Because of the number of people, only about half of them had evacuated despite the carriages being dispatched one by one.

‘There are still a lot of people left...we need more time, we can only depend on our senpai now...’

Eru stood at the end of the line, looking at the fight between the behemoth and the Silhouette Knights with a grim expression. Using spells beyond human capability—overt spells—were negated by the invulnerable armored shell, leaving no trace of damage. Before the colossal beast, even the crystallization of human technology, the Silhouette Knights, were insignificant. The Eru being just one person was even more powerless.

His face was serious. The situation of the high school pilots were overwhelmingly bad... No, it was hopeless, their attacks did no damage at all. Their tactic revolved around retreating, disrupting it with deft movements. The Silhouette Knights would fall with just

a single hit because of the difference in mass. If the pilots continued to accumulate fatigue and stress—it was hard to think of a good ending.

‘I will evacuate everyone, so don’t die Senpai...!’

No matter how fast a Silhouette Knight was, there is no guarantee it could get out of the way of the behemoth charging with a full head of steam. As such, the other knights would concentrate their attacks on the behemoth to divert the behemoth’s attention if it locked onto their comrades. Their attacks did not hurt the behemoth, but it was frustrated at the annoyance.

“Hahaha! Is that it, this thing is big, but can’t do anything to us!”

Dietrich shouted. In order to overcome the intimidating aura stemming from the gigantic body of the beast, he had to convince himself that he had the upper hand. It was meant to motivate himself, but because the tactic to stall for time was working too well, they were taking things lightly. Could it be that this was a slow and dumb beast that was all bark but no bite? In actual fact, it would take just one hit to shatter a Silhouette Knight, but toying with the behemoth this way had dulled their sense of judgment.

For a short time, they seemed to be successful in their bid to drag out the battle. The behemoth that was chasing after the escaping Silhouette Knights slowed down suddenly. The pilots watched the behemoth’s change, as it took a huge breath with a lung capacity appropriate for its colossal size, sucking in an absurd amount of air.

The next second, a fierce breath of tornado shot out from its mouth. This was a ranged magic attack. The pilots that assumed the behemoth could only charge and attack physically were caught off guard by the sudden projectile spell. A tornado tore ahead in a straight line. The turbulence from the wind currents engulfed a machine that didn’t get away in time. The Silhouette Knight couldn’t resist the raging air currents which twisted its armor and squashed its crystal tissue.

The 10-meter tall mass of steel—the Silhouette Knight flew into the sky and fell heavily to the ground. The impact shattered the

limbs which had the least durability, which broke off from the torso. Because the Silhouette Knights were humanoid-shaped, its tattered image burned deep into the heart of the pilots.

“Hya! Ugu... Wah!”

Dietrich saw the whole process clearly. His classmate that had been with him through high school—and his Silhouette Knight—was destroyed, making him scream as if his throat was spasming.

The next moment, another machine disappeared before Dietrich’s eyes with a loud bang. He didn’t understand what happened, but he got it when he shifted his gaze.

The behemoth struck with its tail. The moment that the machine stopped, it was hit by the tail which was swinging with inertia, flying out in a twisted lump. Dietrich was safe because of luck—his position was slightly out of range. He would have been swept by the tail if he was a couple of steps forward.

Two Silhouette Knights were easily shattered like pottery in a blink of an eye. The pilots realized how wrong they were to think that they could hold the behemoth off somehow. The behemoth turned its head towards the surviving Silhouette Knights as if it was flaunting how easily it could destroy them. The perpetrator of the entire incident was targeting them next.

“Wwwwaaaaahhhh!”

“Oooorrrraaaa!”

The two sounds coincided with each other. The former was Dietrich screaming in horror because of the demon beast, the latter was Edgar shouting to overcome the fear in his heart to steel himself.

‘Damn! How can I be so careless! The behemoth is a battalion-level demon beast... I knew it was a monster that could not be handled by the handful of us!’

Edgar couldn’t forgive himself for the loss of his comrades’ lives because he underestimated the enemy. His anger was stronger

than his fear, pushing him on.

“Everyone avoid facing it head-on! No matter what, evasion takes priority! Just a bit more, everyone please hang on!”

They had engaged the behemoth, everyone would be wiped out if they turned and ran suddenly. After hearing Edgar’s spirited voice, the other Knight Runners responded to him even though they were shivering in fear. All of them used everything they had to dodge the behemoth’s attacks. Right now, they could only put their lives on the line and keep pestering the behemoth.

Under the rampage of the behemoth’s magic, the high school pilots were forced into a dire situation.



Eru and the others safely evacuated the middle schoolers, he hopped onto the last carriage himself. He watched the battle from the carriage speeding away from the behemoth. The high schoolers were at a severe disadvantage with the magic attack of the behemoth, killing off any chance of them running away even if Eru and the rest had already left. The conversation he had with Edgar flashed across his mind. Even if his message wouldn’t reach them, the only thing he could do now is to give his support.

At this moment, a red shadow appeared in the corner of Eru’s eye. He turned his head in a hurry and was shocked after identifying it. The red shadow was the Silhouette Knight, Guyale.

‘Could it be...’ As he thought, he turned his head ahead and

saw the battle still raging on between the behemoth and the other Silhouette Knights. This meant Guyale was abandoning the other students and escaping by himself. Eru jumped off the carriage when he understood this. Everyone was stunned by his action and couldn't stop him. He ran after Guyale with the speed of a bullet.

A red Silhouette Knight was running in the bright forest under the sunny sky.

The quiet forest extended all around it, there was nothing in the surroundings. But the red machine was focused in its task, sprinting hard as if it was being chased. In fact, the red Silhouette Knight Guyale and its pilot Dietrich Cunitz were pressed into this situation with no route to escape. What was driving Dietrich was pure terror. The image of his classmate's Silhouette Knight being crushed by the behemoth cycled in his mind endlessly. Dietrich didn't even dare to turn back, blindly pushing Guyale to sprint forward. Although he was not the one running, his lungs were constricted because of fear and his breathing was irregular.

Knight Runners had absolute trust in their machines. There were demon beasts which had power beyond the Silhouette Knights, but Dietrich didn't think they were invincible. He was not prepared to face an enemy that shrugged off attacks and could destroy Silhouette Knights in one move. In the end, he fell into a state of panic and he made the shameful choice of saving himself by sacrificing his classmates.

But the goddess of fate did not let him off so easily.

Guyale's speed suddenly dropped drastically. Although Dietrich was in a state of panic, he immediately thought of a reason for this. He went through the battle earlier and sprinted at full speed. He didn't display the calmness he showed in his training, running hard in an inefficient manner. What awaited him was a dead battery.

The fear that accompanied his immobility seized Dietrich, but he could still do something about it. He stopped Guyale and switched to standby mode to rest and recover his mana reserves. After confirming that the behemoth was not pursuing him, he sighed in relief and steadied his hurried breathing.

After stopping, he gathered some of his wits and felt a strong pang of regret. He shook his head to clear away this thought. But being unable to move, all sorts of thoughts emerged, pushing Dietrich into a corner.

—That's right, I abandoned my comrades and ran—

—Leaving your brother in arms behind, a shameful behavior for knights—

'So... So what! Staying there meant dying in vain! I only chose to live, and the code of chivalry didn't say anything about dying for nothing!'

Dietrich denied the accusations of his own conscience. His calm breathing became hurried again, he didn't even notice his hand holding the control stick was becoming stiff because he was gripping too hard. His eyes opened wide as he sweated profusely as he affirmed and denied his own thoughts.

Dietrich who was tormented by his own thoughts heard a sound that drew nearer from the distance and came to his senses. It was the screeching sound of compressed air, which was followed by the sound of metal rubbing on metal. His vision ahead was suddenly widened and he couldn't react because of how sudden things were happening.

The chest plate armor of Silhouette Knights was connected by compressed air for ease of entry into the cockpit. But it was opened suddenly, although he didn't activate the control for the hatch, and had no reason to do so. To open the hatch from the outside, you had to manipulate a complicated set of levers and had to be careful to not dismantle the armor by accident. From this situation, someone was opening the hatch from the outside by lever.

A figure jumped up to the open hatch which confirmed his deduction. A petite body with a head of silvery purple hair. That figure was Ernesti who smiled casually at Dietrich and said:

"I finally caught up with you Senpai."

Eru said with a simple tone as if he had simply forgotten to

bring something. Eru tilted his head and continued:

“I will get straight to the point Senpai, are you running away?”

For Eru, this question was meant to be a confirmation, but Dietrich trembled when he heard Eru. The sudden appearance of his junior asking so bluntly made him hysterical.

“...! Ah, d...damn...right! Running... What’s wrong with that! Just missing one man won’t change the tide of battle! Why do I have to die in vain? The code of chivalry doesn’t tell us to abandon our lives!”

Dietrich repeated his thoughts, not caring how broken his logic was. He was not answering Eru, but trying to convince himself. Eru nodded with his usual peaceful smile and said to the agitated Dietrich:

“That’s great.”

“...What?”

Dietrich didn’t expect such a reaction and lifted up his head, tongue-tied. Great? What did he say to make Eru so happy?

“Because this is sufficient reason for me to borrow Guyale from you.”

When Dietrich realized what he meant, Eru had drawn his Winchester. This was the last scene he remembered while he was still conscious.

After felling Dietrich with a single air bullet, Eru made a pleased expression and nodded his head with satisfaction. Although he could sympathize with Dietrich’s situation, Eru was still angry.

Eru perked himself up and scanned the cockpit. Silhouette Knights were 10-meter tall giants, but the cockpit was tight and messy with all sorts of gears. Most prominent was the seat in the center, the control stick to the side and the pedals under the seat. The Knight Runner controlled the Silhouette Knight by holding the

control sticks and stepping on the pedals. Eru recalled the functions of the pilot seat and the activation procedure.

After Eru undid the harness and was preparing to drag the unconscious Dietrich out, he thought of something.

“If I leave him here knocked out, won’t he die if a wild beast attacks him?”

Although he was angry at Dietrich for running away by himself, Eru was not willing to kill him. After contemplating for a while, Eru saw some space behind the seat. The cockpit of Silhouette Knights would usually have blankets, food, a first aid kit for emergency supplies, enough for a few days of solo travel if they lost contact with their team. These items were stuffed behind their seat so they wouldn’t interfere with their piloting.

“Eh, it’s a bit of a waste, but I can make space here.”

Eru randomly pulled out some of the items and threw them out. After confirming there was enough space, he squeezed the unconscious Dietrich in there. Although this position was uncomfortable for humans, Eru wasn’t bothered by it.

After ‘settling’ Dietrich, Eru turned toward the seat. Unfortunately, the size was designed for high schoolers. Eru wouldn’t be able to reach the control stick and pedals with his stature. The seat did not have the convenient function of being adjustable like the cars back on Earth.

Eru already anticipated this, he came with a plan in mind. He slashed at the consoles on either side of the seat calmly, destroying the casing. He was not doing this out of frustration. He pulled out silver wires from within the destroyed panels—Silver Nerves. Eru coiled the wires around the Winchester, sat down and buckled himself in. The Winchester was made from the white mist tree that was an excellent conductor of mana, it became a primitive control input device by entangling silver nerves around it.

“...I have to do this live with no backup plan, failure is not an option.”

The silver nerves transmitted mana and scripts through the control stick and pedals to the magic engine, which in turn used the scripts to operate the Silhouette Knight. The commands of the pilots were interpreted by the magius engine, transforming them into scripts to move each part of the Silhouette Knight. Taking this concept to the extreme, if you had great control over the scripts, you could operate the Silhouette Knights without control sticks.

But that was only in theory. It was difficult for pilots to conceptualize and control Silhouette Knights through scripts alone, so the control stick and pedals were necessary to reduce the burden on pilots and simplify the control. By having physical control sticks and pedals that matched the 4 limbs of the pilots, the movement of these controls could be used as input data for the maneuvering of the robot, a semi-automatic mode of control. The current way of piloting a Silhouette Knight was a combination of physical control and script transmission, a balance between simplicity of control and complexity of actions that could be taken.

The problem Eru had with the Silhouette Knight lay with the difficulty in using the physical controls. That was why he planned to use total script control from the start, using his own magius circuit to handle the large stream of control scripts. This was an absurd idea, but Eru had a script-processing speed beyond the realm of normal humans, so it was a worthwhile bet.

Eru took a light breath, calmed down, closed his eyes and concentrated.

The Winchester connected to the magius engine through the silver nerves. Normally, it was the Knight Runner that answered the magic input query, so it did not have any resistance to the pilot assuming direct control. It was surprisingly easy to establish a bypass route. Eru's consciousness became one with the Silhouette Knight, reading and processing the pre-programmed scripts in the magic engine.

Eru analyzed the script with his eyes closed. He constructed a magic program from scratch, growing it outward in all directions. Arms stretched out from Eru's mind to draw the magic program—reading its contents. Even though the code and symbols were different, but being in the flow of data was nostalgic, and he smiled gently.

“Alright, time to let you see the power of a professional programmer.”

He began analyzing the core of the magic scripts at a fast pace, starting by comparing what he had learned so far with the scripts within the magius engine.

“Starting pattern analysis... Similar scripts detected, Physical Boost, Amplifier...”

Most of the script in the magius engine was similar to the scripts he knew. Eru identified them one at a time, using the script to understand its purpose. The more similarities there were, the faster he could grasp the internal workings.

“The base is physical boost? Crystal tissue is the emulation of muscle tissues. To move them, the theory is the same...”

Using architect sigils, he dissected each script. Each part formed complicated patterns and were interconnected, the magic program was expanding to the limit of his consciousness.

“The control of the crystal tissue...placement, the connection between each module, output control, this is the mana output of the ether reactor...”

Guyale which was kneeling on one knee in standby mode trembles slightly. Its fingers moved, its eyes began to focus and see the surroundings clearly.

“To activate... I will need to connect my physical boost with the movement script of the Silhouette Knight. It needs to be converted to accommodate the Silhouette Knight, using the default output control parameters to move...”

The mana produced by the ether reactor executed the script issued by the pilot, broadcasting throughout the entire Silhouette Knight through the silver nerves. The Silhouette Knight loyally obeyed the command, using the mana stored in the crystal tissue to contract and expand. The machine vibrated, standing up slowly like a newborn deer.

“Operation parameter conversion complete, activation start... Adjusting output values, mana reserves adequate. Okay, take one step...”

Guyale’s gigantic body balanced itself awkwardly, taking one heavy step after another, taking large but unsteady strides. The movement was like that of a zombie, staggering and slow.

“Feedback adjustment, optimizing.”

Eru used the feedback details from practical movements to scan for excessive movement in the crystal tissue and debugged the script. The script still had traces of being a magic script, but errors were detected by synchronizing movement and user input, optimizing it in a short time. Guyale’s movement changed from unsightly shuffling to a graceful walk in the span of a few steps.

It had been half an hour since Eru started accessing the magius engine. The Silhouette Knight, the weapon which was the crystallization of humanity’s wisdom was now completely under his control.

Guyale moved as Eru wished. There was no lag because of physical defects or inefficient scripting. It was one with the pilot, making total and full control a reality.

The situation was dire.

The high school Knight Runners were in a deadly battle all this while, so Eru issued Guyale a command. It accepted the command and started sprinting as if to make up for all the time that was wasted.

But—

As he ran, Eru’s expression shifted from being tense to that of a smile. He didn’t feel anxious or pressured. The reason was simple, Eru was piloting a robot right now. The robot followed his wishes and was sprinting wildly.

Eru didn’t think too much when he chased after Guyale, he was too preoccupied when accessing the magius engine. He only

had the leisure to think after he started moving, coming to terms with what he was doing.

Eru thought it was childish to react this way, but he couldn't contain his emotions.

“Ah, Ahhh, Ahhhhhh! Robot robot, I am piloting a running robot!”

For him, be it the tremor from each step the machine took, the holo monitor showing the scenery that was disappearing at a terrifyingly fast pace or the inertia Eru was feeling, all of it feels so blissful. Who could stop Eru's joyous laughter? Eru forgot about the powerful demon beast that was waiting for him ahead, instead immersing himself in the happiness of piloting a Silhouette Knight.

Guyale ferried Eru who was forgetting about his original objective as well as the foaming and unconscious Dietrich toward the battlefield at an amazing pace...

Chapter 8: Final battle, land emperor

The trees in the plains increased in number gradually until their density matched that of a forest.

A road paved with stones extended to the east in this forest; this was the biggest road in Fremmevira Kingdom that led to the east—the ‘Eastern Fremmevira Highway’. From Känkänen to Jantunen was the ‘Western Fremmevira Highway’ and from Jantunen to the kingdom’s border was the Eastern Fremmevira Highway. These two highways were built with cobble stones, the historical route that was paved for the ease of transport when constructing the fortresses at the front lines. It now shouldered the duty of intra-kingdom transport; its active use matched its reputation as the leading traffic junction.

The road that was used frequently by caravans with Silhouette Knight escorts was desolate. It might be due to the demon beasts’ stampede or the rumors spreading among merchants about the sightings of a gargantuan demon beast.

There was a tense silence on this road, which was broken suddenly.

The sounds of hooves from dozens of carriages reverberated in the air as they ferried the Laihiala Pilot Academy students who were escaping. The high school Knight Runners were risking their lives to cover the evacuation, so the carriages were running at full speed. But this was too taxing on the horses, so the pace now was slower than normal. Even so, they were already halfway to Jantunen.

The exhausted students sat in the carriages. They weren’t chased by any demon beast during this period. They had calmed

down after some time, but the uneasiness in their chests lingered.

“What happened to Eru—?”

With this solemn atmosphere, Chid and Ady sat on the last carriage, looking behind them blankly. Eru jumped off the carriage and entered the forest when they were escaping from Cloquet’s Forest. It happened so suddenly that they lost track of him before they could even try to stop Eru.

“...Hey, could it be...”

Chid mumbled as if he had thought of something. Ady tilted her head questioningly.

“That guy, did he hijack a Silhouette Knight to join the fight?”

Impossible—Ady wanted to dismiss it, but fell into deep thought. The probable deduction morphed into a clear image in her mind. Common sense told her that Eru who did not attend pilot school couldn’t control a Silhouette Knight. But he might be able to make it work with what he learned through self-study—She didn’t know that Eru had actually succeeded. Ady easily imagined the face of Eru challenging the Land Emperor head-on, it seemed so natural.

“Ah—Yeah, that makes sense. Eru will probably do that.”

“No need to worry. He can run away with those legs of his if things go awry.”

The magic invented by Eru called ‘Aero Thrust’ was surprisingly fast. Who could catch up with Eru who was faster than wolves and rivaled that of a bird? Even if the opponent was that mammoth demon beast, Eru could run away if he put his mind to it. The two of them imagined that scene and laughed.

As they predicted, Eru had hijacked Guyale right now and was charging towards the behemoth. It was hard to tell if it was a blessing or misfortune that the twins on the shaking carriage had no idea about this.

The instructor on the carriage in front alerted the entire

convoy. Clouds of dust could be seen in the direction they were heading, and they heard the sound of horse hooves in the distance. Everyone understood what was causing all that noise. A group of Silhouette Knights—the standard model ‘Karrdators’—was advancing in a column. All citizens of Fremmevira Kingdom were familiar with these figures and understood why they were here.

“...The garrison knights of Jantunen!”

The voice of the instructor on the leading carriage reached the carriages in the back. The students poked their heads out of the carriages one by one, their faces bright with excitement.

This group was a scale larger than two platoons, consisting of roughly 90 Silhouette Knights. They were followed by the maintenance and supplies corps. Most of Jantunen’s military forces were here, the most they could muster one day after receiving the envoy from Balguerie.

Karrdators were the official mass-produced standard model, with a rugged exterior. After experiencing many battles, they had a unique charm to it. Their shoulder armor was decorated with the Fremmevira Kingdom flag and the Jantunen city crest, displaying the pride they had in protecting this land.

The Laihiala students were not uneasy anymore. No matter how mighty the demon beast was, this group of knights would defeat it. They had faith in the power and credibility of the knights.

A sense of relief spread among the knights that discovered the carriages at the same time. Although they had set off as soon as possible, but they had already prepared themselves mentally for the possibility of the entire Laihiala student body being massacred. From the looks of things, most of them made it out safely, and have brought with them valuable information about the current location of the behemoth.

“I see...the high school Knight Runners...”

It included information on why the Laihiala students could evacuate safely. A lot of the knights were graduates of Laihiala Pilot Academy, and were moved by the honorable actions of their juniors and steeled themselves.

“Please rest assured. In order to protect our kingdom, and not let their sacrifice be in vain, we will crush the enemy.”

The Jantunen knights engraved this determination within their hearts, their morale grew stronger than before. The group of knights learned that the Laihiala students met the behemoth less than half a day ago, so their meeting with the behemoth was at hand. The tension of the knights grew sky-high with each step they took.



A red Silhouette Knight was sprinting wildly in the lush forest. Its speed was incredible, double that of a normal Silhouette Knight.



Because Eru was controlling it with magic scripts, he was now in sync with the magius engine. His thoughts were converted into scripts that were transmitted to the entire machanical body without any lag. The crystal tissue of the Silhouette Knight was being moved, its reaction speed was better than organic muscles, executing commands without delays. Guyale now had double the reaction and movement speed of a standard Silhouette Knight.

Guyale maintained its peak performance as it ran, and heard the sound of howls in front. It was a mix of lightning explosions and raging winds. He would engage the behemoth in a few minutes. Eru's expression twisted with joy, showing unrestrained happiness

as he began his first battle in a Silhouette Knight.



With a dull thud of metal on metal, the steel giant was knocked into the sky. It flew under the tremendous force and hit the ground hard, tumbling a few rounds. No one could spare the effort to confirm the safety of the pilot, but from the way it landed, the caved-in torso and the smashed arms, the pilot couldn't be unharmed.

“Damn!”

The high school Knight Runners kept on fighting after the middle schoolers evacuated. It was not that they didn't want to run, they didn't have the luxury of showing their backs to the behemoth. The battle had raged on for some time, compared to the fatigue showing on the pilots' faces, the behemoth lived up to its name of being a fortress, showing no signs of slowing down. There was also an overwhelming difference in strength between them, the discrepancies in endurance were surfacing with each passing second.

Facing pressure that the knights at the borders failed to withstand, the high school pilots' machine fell one by one, there were only 3 left.

The behemoth's tail swung toward Earlecumber whose pilot Edgar was distracted by his comrade's demise. Edgar instinctively felt that he couldn't dodge the tail bending like a whip and pushed the stance of Earlecumber as low as possible while swinging the shield on his left arm, parrying the blow. An incredible technique

only Edgar who was the top elite in high school could pull off with the help of Earlecumber's excellent performance. But the shield was knocked away from his hand with just the tail's glancing blow. Earlecumber cautiously steadied its stance and pulled away from the behemoth.

'I lost my shield! This is bad, the situation is desperate!'

Even so, Earlecumber's damage was slight, the other two machines' mana pools and damage were at their limits and might expire any second now. Edgar couldn't shake off the foreboding sense of doom that flashed across his mind. His team couldn't hold on much longer and might be wiped out in 5 minutes...

The behemoth didn't let up its attack, shooting out Tornado Breath again. The raging wind had a large area of effect, they could be pulled in if they didn't get further away.

"Please... Trandorches, move!"

Helvi realized that the Tornado Breath was aimed at her and screamed like a banshee as she tried to get away. Trandorches squeezed out its last ounce of strength despite the accumulated fatigue and damage, but lost its balance because of the fierce air current.

"Helvi!—Damn it, make it in time!"

Edgar roared, commanding Earlecumber to charge at the behemoth who was in turn closing in on Helvi in order to distract it. He hung onto a glimmer of hope and fired his Silhouette Arm, Arquebus. His full-powered attack bounced harmlessly off the armored shell while the behemoth was still locked onto the Silhouette Knight before it. The running behemoth accelerated, closing in on Trandorches that was struggling to stand.

Just as Helvi and even Edgar were prepared for the next victim to appear—

"Ah hahahaha! Hue hahaha! Found it—I am here!"

A red Silhouette Knight intruded onto the battlefield with

arrogant laughter. The first thing he saw in the forest was the behemoth that was about to run over the robot lying on the ground.

Guyale increased its speed instantly, rushing to the behemoth's left flank like a scarlet bullet. It drew its sword on the way and lunged without thinking—concentrating its power at a single point, aiming at one of the few weak points of the demon beast known as a fortress, which were its eyes.

Guyale not only moved at a speed beyond normal machines, it was accurate and precise.

Before Guyale's blade reached the behemoth, it noticed the red figure—because of that, it turned its head on reflex. The distance was too close to avoid, Guyale's sword accurately caught up with the eyeball on the behemoth's turned head. The sword looked as if it was drawn in, stabbing at the eyeball and colliding with the shell.

This was a pure coincidence.

The shell that should be protecting the behemoth's eyes had a slit. It was a crack a certain knight inflicted with the cost of his life half a month ago.

If the behemoth hadn't moved and took the hit, this blow would probably have been deflected by the shell covering it. But because it turned its head, the sword coincidentally pierced in from the gap.

Guyale used double the speed of a Silhouette Knight and attacked with a stab that focused its entire metallic body weight. The sword screeched and sparks flew because of the friction as it penetrated the pupil of the giant beast. Eru thought his concentrated fatal attack would reach till the hilt, but it snapped in two loudly and shattered.

The surprise attack took out that eye, but it didn't reach into the skull. The sword couldn't withstand the impact of their collision and fractures.

Eru let go of the sword when he realized it broke and leapt

into the air to avoid hitting the behemoth head-on. Guyale slipped past the behemoth's charge with its massive body, spinning in midair, followed by two back somersaults when it landed, pulling away from the behemoth before stopping.

The behemoth let out an angry howl that was never heard before. Blood sprayed out profusely from its left eye socket, something it had never experienced before permeating its body. The defense of the behemoth was top-class among demon beasts, and didn't suffer injuries even when attacked. The pain of its eye being pierced and losing half its field of vision was a setback it had seldom experienced.

The behemoth's remaining right eye was bloodshot as it searched for the accursed enemy that took its left eye. It lost interest in everything else, the only thing that mattered was the red figure it last saw with its left eye.

The high school Knight Runners forgot they were still in a battlefield as they stared at the scene before them dumbfounded. They couldn't keep up with the development. They thought Guyale abandoned them, but it was back with amazing speed, and broke through the invulnerable shell of the behemoth and blinded it.

The giant beast before them was howling furiously as it took aim at the red machine. It was only concerned about Guyale, ignoring Edgar and the others.

"Right, Helvi!"

Edgar rushed to the downed robot while the behemoth is distracted. The exhausted Trandorches was damaged and couldn't walk properly. But Edgar was relieved that Helvi was still alive.

Edgar felt a tremor and took a stance with Earlecumber. He then realized that the behemoth was charging at Guyale with an angry howl. The one-eyed behemoth was even swifter than before, but Guyale was more agile. Edgar questioned his eyes, the Guyale he knew had never displayed such a performance before.

He even doubted whether Dietrich was piloting it. But he didn't have the time to worry about that. If Guyale could dodge the

behemoth's fierce attacks, that meant Edgar had time to rescue his wounded comrades.

'Sorry Di, please hold him off for a while longer...!'

They turned their backs to the scarlet robot dancing with the giant beast, leaning on each other as they escaped.

Edgar didn't know Ernesti was piloting Guyale or what his situation was like. Inside Guyale, Eru was gleefully staring at the holo monitor that was displaying the approaching colossal body.

"So this is a behemoth, a demon beast and a battle. This is...using a Silhouette Knight! To battle!"

A ferocious smile appeared on his face.

His surprise attack yielded results beyond his expectations. But the wounded and bloodied giant beast harbored even stronger killing intent and charged at Eru. With majesty comparable to mountains, it closed in with murderous intent and power that twisted the very scenery. Even though the scene before him was enough to scare off veteran knights, Eru only felt intense joy.

"Come at me, come at me, come on come on!"

—Piloting robots and fighting massive enemies.

The dream of every robot otaku. Was there anyone who didn't wish for this? He had no intention of backing down, to move away from his happiness. Driven by the elation of his body, his chosen action is—

"Come on, I'm going ahead!"

Guyale bent slightly and ran at the behemoth while kicking up earth with each step.

To close the gap in an instant. The moment before impact, Guyale disappeared from the behemoth's vision. The behemoth, which lost an eye didn't notice, charging at Guyale's old position. Guyale jumped a second before they collided, kicked off the

behemoth's uneven armored shell and jump over it. For the blinded behemoth with limited field of vision, catching Guyale was an impossible mission. Eru somersaulted in midair deftly as he thought.

“Ah, ah ah, amazing! A shell with no gaps and weak points, invincible armor! It is too tough, even slashing at it with a running start won't help, magic attacks are useless too. Alright, just use one of the clichés in destroying massive weapons!”

Eru mumbled nonsensically with heightened emotions, bending his knees smoothly to lessen the landing impact and drew Guyale's spare sword.

“The weak points of massive guys are usually legs and joints. Let's start there!”

Guyale used its running momentum and stabbed with terrifying accuracy at the back of the kneecaps, aiming for the gap between the shells. This attack hit the muscles behind the shell, but it felt tougher than imagined. Eru noticed it and pulled out the sword, retreating from the behemoth.

“Hmm—it didn't go in! Other than the shell, is the rest of the body this tough too?”

Eru didn't expect the behemoth's physical boost to raise the endurance of internal tissues. To support its massive weight, the behemoth had to focus on strengthening its four limbs, which was obvious and a nightmare for its foe.

The behemoth was agitated by the injury to its hind leg and turned around. Even a slight graze from the limbs of the turning behemoth would be enough to destroy Guyale. Eru pulled further back and ran out of the behemoth's sight again as he reviewed his previous attack.

“I didn't harm the joints just now, but it was more effective than hacking at the shell.”

Hehe—Eru was wearing a happy and cute smile for some reason. He still stood a chance, but the execution was difficult,

needing tenacity and patience.

“Seems like this will be a long fight... Eh, I’m fine with that, I don’t really hate that.”

Eru was smiling casually in the face of the raging beast and advanced with the red robot. The battle was just beginning.

‘Ug... Hmmmm...?’

‘He’ finally woke up.

He saw a dark space in front. As his dull consciousness cleared, he felt a pain from his uncomfortable body posture.

“Uguu...here...here is...”

He tried to resume a normal position in the cramped space and groaned, but a special pressure pinned him to the wall in front.

He let out a muffled scream, the pressure cleared his mind. What he felt was inertia—A familiar sensation for all Knight Runners. But the inertia he felt was stronger than he remembered. This had to be the pilot seat of the Silhouette Knight. When he thought about this—Dietrich Cunitz recalled the last image from his memory. Indeed, a short junior appeared before him, and—

He hastily assumed a normal position and lifted his head from the back of the seat. The first thing he saw was the looming behemoth that filled the entire holo monitor.

“Gyaaaaahhhh!?”

You couldn’t blame him for screaming like a slaughtered chicken. He saw the close-up of the ferocious beast straight after waking up. The sudden scream surprised Ernesti and he almost lost control.

“Oh no! Ha!”

After recovering from a tripping position, Guyale slid to the

left of the charging behemoth, evading it safely. Eru pulled away from the behemoth and glanced behind before the behemoth got ready to charge.

“Eh—good morning Senpai. We are in a life and death situation, so please keep quiet.”

Dietrich’s jaw dropped after listening to his calm tone that contradicted the content. The words sounded logical, but he couldn’t understand why he was back here when he should have ran far away, his head was full of questions.

“You...You! Are...you insane!? No, before that, why are you fighting!?”

He had loads of questions to ask, but had to shut his mouth as Guyale started to run.

The behemoth’s furious face filled the whole holo monitor. The giant beast was emitting a much more murderous air compared to his prior escape. This was beyond the extent of chasing obstacles away, but raging killing intent. Guyale was moving at a speed that was faster than anything the Knight Runner Dietrich had experienced, dodging the massive beast’s attacks by a hair’s breadth. After seeing several scenes of imminent death, Dietrich didn’t care about appearances and was on the verge of tears. He suppressed his voice and gritted his teeth, enduring it with a pitiful face. He knew if he said anything that distracted Eru, Guyale might really be done in.

‘What...is this!? What’s happening!? Is this my punishment for running off alone?’

Although he didn’t know, the other machines were either destroyed or had fallen back, there was only Guyale battling alone here. It was ironic that the situation was the opposite of what happened when he fled. If Eru who was piloting the machine fought on, Dietrich couldn’t escape again.

‘Seems like I am fated to stay here... Why did he bring me along? He wants me to see the fight till the very end? He wants the man...who abandoned his comrades to watch?’

Eru couldn't leave him behind even if he wanted to—Dietrich wouldn't be able to guess the truth. The titanic beast didn't care about Dietrich's feelings and the battle between the two raged on.

The behemoth used its devastating strength to shatter the earth, its Tornado Breath uprooting the trees. A glancing blow from this would be enough to kill, but Guyale that was piloted by the petite youth was evading them happily and was even counterattacking the limbs of the beast.

Dietrich lost his cool when he woke up, but had gathered himself now and was perplexed by another issue. Unbelievably, the young pilot was a match for the giant beast, although he was on the defensive. Because Dietrich was the pilot of Guyale, he understood how amazing this was. The performance of this machine was average, the training robot in Laihiala Pilot Academy were second-rate equipment anyway. This was clear since the other Silhouette Knights piloted by high schoolers couldn't match the beast.

The problem lay with this pilot. Dietrich also knew this short first year that showed up at the pilot school occasionally. He would have never believed this small youth had such outstanding piloting skills. But since he was taking the beast on right now, Dietrich had to give in.

'Too amazing, no, that is an inadequate description. This is 'strange'... But if I... If we want to survive, I have let him battle on...!'

Dietrich fell into the chasm of despair once, but he saw hope in the scene before him. A sense of longing grew in the feeble youth who lost to himself.

In Dietrich's eyes, Guyale and Eru were fighting a steady battle. But in reality, they were not doing that well. There were two significant and pressing issues.

First was the mana pool of Guyale. The maximum time a Silhouette Knight could fight at full strength was 1 hour under normal conditions. Any more and the mana supply would not be able to keep up with the usage rate, leading to diminishing performance. It had been 2 hours since Guyale started the battle... This meant it had kept up peak performance in double the time.

This was thanks to Eru's delicate control and his grasp of the operating system. The optimization of the script lowered the mana consumption rate, limiting the usage of mana in tissues not in operation to conserve energy. Also, he was not running Guyale at full power all the time, and included breaks for Guyale to 'breathe' and restore mana. His actions looked intense at first sight, but he had been secretly minimizing the consumption rate once he decided to fight a long battle.

But that was still not enough, he had exhausted half his mana reserve. If this went on, he could optimistically hang on for about 2 hours.

Next would be the weapon's wear and tear.

After attacking the behemoth repeatedly for 2 hours, Guyale's blade was twisted and full of cracks, making the attacks that caused minimal damage even less effective. There was also the magic armament, but Guyale's 'Chasm'¹⁴ was not suitable for pinpoint attacks.

Eru considered programming an overt spell, but doing that while controlling the Silhouette Knight was too great of a burden, especially if it was tactical-level magic. He gave that up but his morale was still high, although the lack of ways to attack made him feel helpless.

'If I knew this would happen, I would have armed myself with several swords like a porcupine.'

Even though he was upset, Eru persisted with his battle tactic. Or rather, he couldn't change it. Guyale relied mainly on evasion while looking for a chance to win.

As the battle went on, even Dietrich noticed the frequency of counters was dropping. If they just wanted to survive, dodging would be fine, but they would lose in terms of endurance. If they planned to escape, they had to use this chance to attack the giant beast's legs and lower its mobility. And attacking was a possibility with Eru's piloting skills. But Eru had let a number of opportunities go.

‘Why are you not countering...! If you keep running like this, our chances of escaping will fall!’

Dietrich’s anxiety rose as he could only watch. As a Knight Runner, Dietrich knew Silhouette Knights couldn’t fight for long. He chose a time when Eru had evaded an attack and asked:

“Hey... Hey, Ernesti, you have not been countering for a while, what’s wrong!?”

Eru was slightly surprised when Dietrich who had been quiet suddenly spoke. But Eru explained the situation.

“The behemoth is too hard, the sword is tattered. The attacks are not damaging it.”

Dietrich stole a glance at the sword through the holo monitor, the blade was twisted badly and was totally blunt. Dietrich moaned.

‘Need to think...find a weapon...we made it so far, we can’t die now!’

He searched frantically from the scene displayed on the holo monitor for something that could be used as a weapon. Ernesti was piloting Guyale, but there were things Dietrich could do as well. Dietrich was finally back on the battlefield by his own will, his state of mind had changed drastically without him noticing, and his participation yielded great results. Eru was also scanning the surroundings as he fought, but he had to dodge the behemoth’s charges, so he couldn’t focus too much on the surroundings. That was why Dietrich was the one who noticed ‘that’. He shouted loudly when he discovered it:

“Besides the fallen Silhouette Knight! Take its weapon!”

Eru took just a second to look at the spot Dietrich pointed at and saw a Silhouette Knight that had broken down. Eru comprehended Dietrich’s intention, accelerating after evading the behemoth with a low posture, almost hugging the ground. Eru charged forward and picked up a sword from the fallen robot. Since the high school pilots mainly used Silhouette Arms to attack, there was almost no damage on the sword. An invincible smile returned

to Eru's face.

“Thank you Senpai. I have been troubled because of my weapon.”

“No... No need for thanks, just carry on fighting the behemoth!”

Eru faced the behemoth immediately and reevaluated its status. Its legs were bleeding after numerous slashes, meaning the damage it took was not trivial.

“Okay, mana pool is less than 50%. If I don't take down a leg, it will probably catch up if we escape.”

Guyale raised its new sword and began its counterattack. The behemoth was massive, but was bad with intrinsic movements, so its natural enemy was Guyale which used speed and precision as its weapons.

The behemoth used its endless stamina to rampage. Although it had been attacking nonstop, it had yet to land a single hit. Guyale on the other hand was dealing damage consistently to the giant beast. The wounds on the behemoth's legs were significant. Dripping water could hollow out a stone. With its eyes and limbs bleeding, even the fortress demon beast behemoth was slowing down.

Dietrich was the one to notice again.

Eru heard a shout from behind and scanned the surroundings quickly and saw many Silhouette Knights. He wouldn't miss it even if it was just a glance. These were 'Karrdators' that were synonymous to Silhouette Knights in Fremmevira Kingdom. They were spread out, surrounding Guyale and the behemoth in layers. After seeing their machine model and the flying flags, they understood their identity.

“Karrdator!? Ah, ahhh...that flag... Its the Jantunen garrison knights! Reinforcements are here to rescue us!”

‘They are here...sooner than I expected, I thought it would take a

bit longer before I could escape and rendezvous with everyone.'

Eru quickly thought about his next course of action. Guyale could still fight, but the mana pool was below 30%, it was at a critical juncture. Since the calvary was here, there was no point in buying time and should let the knights take over and retreat. The firepower of Guyale alone was not enough, the forces here should do. He was just stalling for time when facing the giant beast just now, but the time to 'defeat' it had arrived.

The gargantuan beast was not concerned with the situation around it, stubbornly chasing Guyale. Eru dodged easily, luring the behemoth to turn its back to the knights. He then slipped past the left side of the behemoth where it was blinded and dashed toward the formation of the knights. The group of knights probably understood Guyale's intentions and aimed with their Silhouette Arms.

The giant beast only had an eye for the detestable red figure, and was finally being led to the stage of the final battle.



A short time before the knights arrived at the battlefield.

Several Silhouette Knights traveled deftly in the forest instead of the stone pavement of Fremmevira's highway. They were the scouts of the Jantunen garrison knights, their mission was scope out the status of the behemoth before the main forces arrived.

After bashing into the forest from the highway, they found the

density of the forest to be very high. Compared to using carriages and traveling by the highway, the team traveled much faster by cutting through the forest. The behemoth was much closer to the highway than the position reported by the students, so the scouts completed their mission and reported back in no time.

“Is that so? It is right ahead of us... The behemoth not taking the highway is a silver lining.”

Philip Hallhagen commented after listening to the scouting report. He was prepared to fight the behemoth on the highway if the situation called for it, but that wasn't necessary. But his face turned stiff as he listened to the next report.

“We have linked up with 3 of the training robots, there is still one more engaged in battle...”

The high schoolers' Silhouette Knights retreated from battle because of Guyale's intrusion, made it to the highway and were being protected by the garrison knights. Trandorches and another machine was critically damaged, and was sent to the maintenance crew at the back for major overhaul. The remaining Earlecumber suffered minor damage and joined the fighting ranks after receiving simple repairs.

The robot still in battle was Guyale. When the scouts saw the scarlet knight, it was attacking with fearsome might. The scouts did not know how to report this, so they just gave the position of the beast and the fact that a machine was engaging it.

Philip and Gottfried planned the operation based on the gathered intelligence and relayed the orders to all units. Their plan was as follows: They would spread out in squads around the target in a semicircle. From the intelligence of the students who fought it, it was judged that close-quarters combat with the giant beast was very dangerous, so they would be using Silhouette Arms and attacking in waves from a distance to damage the behemoth.

They had also drawn up contingencies for the behemoth's charging and Tornado Breaths. They were expecting casualties, so the worst-case scenario would be the targeted squad will act as bait and stop the behemoth's movements while the others moved in for the kill. The knights moved into the forest with the resolve to risk

death in battle.

The howl of the mammoth beast made the forest tremble.

As the knights moved into position, the beast kept turning in circles at the same spot, rampaging painfully. The knights were confused by this and were dumbfounded when they saw the reason. They saw a red Silhouette Knight moving at incredible speed as the giant beast chased it with blood gushing out of an eye and howling with anger.

“What, what is that...”

The beast could shatter the Silhouette Knight with one blow, but the scarlet machine was using its superior speed to toy with it. Even the commander with his elite skills doubted whether he could match that speed. Everyone was impressed and sighed at this display. They understood that the giant beast was staying in place because it was persistently chasing the scarlet machine. It was too focused on the enemy before it and lost track of its surroundings.

This was a great chance for the knights.

Suddenly, the red robot noticed the knights and stopped. In the next instant, it lured the behemoth to turn its back to the knights and slipped past the flank of the beast toward the knights. Philip grasped its intention and commanded his entire force:

“Scarlet Knight... Thank you! Don’t let this chance slip away! Everyone, ready your Culverins¹⁵!”

Receiving the command from Philip who lifted his sword, the Karrdators readied their magic armament ‘Culverin’. Their objective was to attack in unison with magic, using their numbers to overwhelm the enemy.

The red machine did not slow down, slipping to the back of the formation. Philip swung his sword down as it passed through the last ranks.

“All units, fire!”

The knights anticipated this signal and shot out flames on cue at the behemoth with their Culverins. The high-pitched sound reverberated as fire trails flashed through the sky toward the center of the semicircle, raining down at the mountain-sized monster.

Countless Flaming Lances pierced at the behemoth that was engrossed with the scarlet knight. The overt spell Flaming Lance exploded in columns of flames like a lotus within the forest. The tongues of flame engulfed the entire beast, the flames were so big that they couldn't see what was happening. Even so, the knights did not slow down their persistent attack.

Guyale that made it past the knights stopped at the rear of the formation to rest his machine and recover its mana pool. The machine appeared to be fatigued after making it through a fierce battle, the ether reactor churned noisily as it ran at full speed.

“...That's great! Well done! How, how's that? Damn demon beast, this is the power of the garrison knights! Hahaha!”

Eru frowned when he heard the maniacal laughter of Dietrich behind him. Eru didn't relax as he watched the hellish flames before him. The Culverins kept up their attack and the scale of the fire was increasing gradually, determined to burn everything inside it. Even the behemoth which took pride in its defenses wouldn't be able to escape unscathed from this attack.

‘But it is not an opponent that can be dealt with so simply...’

It was impossible for the situation to go as Eru hoped and the space that was burning was changing. The fire that was burning fiercely was swirling in the form of a whirlpool. No, it was not just the flames that were swirling, but the air current about it was sucking the flames in, turning it into a tornado of fire. The knights sensed that something was wrong and adopted defensive stances, but kept up their attacks.

The tornado flame finally evolved. In the next second, it turned into a slithering, burning snake and whipped at the knights.

“What, what is that!”

The burning snake spat at the knights as it struggled, the flames that were shot out by the knights were dispersed into the surroundings. Fortunately, the knights kept their distance when they attacked, so the Tornado Breath was not fatal. Although they knew about the existence of the Tornado Breath, they didn't expect the behemoth to use it inside that fiery pit, stunning the knights and disrupting their formation.

With the formation falling apart, the attack from the Culverins slowed down. The behemoth realized this and kicked at the remaining flames and leapt out of the fire pit. After its shell was baked in hellish flames that could melt steel, it was burning hot and several wounds could be seen on the giant beast. The injuries on its limbs sustained from Guyale's slashes were burnt badly after the baptism by fire. On the whole, the colossal beast suffered serious damage.

The movement of the behemoth had also slowed significantly, but it was still known as an extraordinarily tough beast with absurd endurance. The charge of the beast was enough to make the knights who were reforming scatter. The behemoth's massive body was in the middle of the reforming group. The movement of the knights was slowed because they were in the midst of forming ranks, making things worse. A number of machines were knocked away during the giant beast's advance, the robots that fell down were mercilessly trampled into lumps of junk.

Some of them tried to engage the behemoth. The shell that was weakened by the heat could be sliced by the sword, but the blades twisted and shattered before they reached the interior. Even wounded, the close-quarters battle between the beast and the Silhouette Knights are hopelessly one-sided, a squad of knights were forced into a corner.

Although the knights were prepared to sacrifice their lives, they were unable to attack in a position that would hit their allies. The occasional magic attacks stopped and their 'ace' showed itself.

"Squad 2, 4 and 8, ready the 'Hammer'!"

Phillip in his command machine 'Sordwort' swung his sword, his instruction gave a sense of purpose to the battle. The knights were prepared to die in this battle, and with the battle turning into

a melee fight, they restrained the beast's movements and showed their ace in the hole.

The Silhouette Knights carrying a massive weapon started running to either flank of the behemoth. They were moving the 'Hard Crust Bunker' that required 4 Silhouette Knights to use—simply put, it was just a giant lump of steel in the shape of a stake.

As shown from its name, the battering ram that needed 4 Silhouette Knights to move could easily destroy a siege wall, the ace they prepared for the demon beast with the reputation of a fortress.

The battering ram was a powerful weapon, but it had the weakness of being 'slow and heavy'. It was a type of weapon that changed mass into destructive force, so it required 4 Silhouette Knights to wield. It was also big in size, so it was a hassle to deploy or withdraw with it. To hit the demon beast, they needed to seal its movements. That was the reason why the knights were deploying their ace with when the giant beast stopped its advance.

The problems with the battering ram had been briefed to all knight units, including the squad that was engaging the behemoth. They knew they couldn't last for long but they refused to back down, facing the behemoth to stop its movements.

The Karrdators that were charging with the battering ram could see this scene clearly. The Knight Runners in their seats gripped their control sticks so tightly that they creaked. They stepped on their pedals with all their might, wanting to crash into the behemoth immediately. This was a battle where they were ready to sacrifice their lives. Even so, their wrath toward the enemy that was massacring their comrades burned on. The battering ram squad roared as they charged in respond to the sacrifice of their comrades.

The air-intake valve made a high-pitched screech, the Karrdators charged at their maximum speed. As they closed in on the beast, they were covered in the shadow of the mountain-like beast. The first battering ram reached the behemoth's side. This was not a precision weapon, so they used their momentum to aim at the biggest target which was the flank and rammed it in.

The weight that required 4 Silhouettes to move had amazing

destructive power. The shell being cooked by flames causing it to soften might have played a part. The battering ram pierced cleanly through the shell of the behemoth into its stomach.

The stake seemed to shake in that moment, the behemoth's colossal body started to move and it howled painfully, louder than when it lost its eye. Its howl to the sky made the ground tremble, massive amounts of blood gushed out from its stomach wound.

“Great! The Hard Crust Bunker is effective! Use this chance to attack and kill it!”

Cheers erupted among the knights. They knew the battering ram was difficult to use, but its power could hurt a battalion-level demon beast. There were two more teams with battering rams and they were closing in on the giant beast. The beast was still writhing in pain, not noticing their advance. The two teams were aiming for the head and the other flank respectively. If they hit these two places, it would be fatal even for a fortress demon beast. Most of the knights were convinced of their victory. The battering ram team that was shouldering the entire army's hope was right before its target.

The moaning and dazed behemoth suddenly looks downward. All the knights and Eru didn't know what this meant and were perplexed. The team that was charging with the battering ram didn't notice—

The behemoth shot a Tornado Breath at the ground. The fierce wind this close to the ground dug up the earth, and the flying debris in this confined space exploded. The battering ram team was unable to evade this, the team aiming for the head was hit by flying boulders and smashed into smithereens.

Amazingly, the behemoth used its stomach to withstand the explosion and the impact of the tornado and 'stood up' with this momentum. All the knights that were maintaining the encirclement of the behemoth stared at the scene on their holo monitors in awe. The 80-meter long behemoth had incredible weight, and its forelegs were completely off the ground as it stood. This bizarre situation made everyone's reaction slower by a beat.

“Oh no! Danger, get away!”

The team aiming for the stomach knew something was awry before Philip shouted and attempted to dodge. But they were carrying the heavy battering ram with them and had been charging at full speed. Even if they wanted to retreat, they couldn't stop their accelerating machines in time.

The behemoth's massive body fell with the pull of gravity right on top of them. The destructive force of the gargantuan demon beast's weight was beyond that of the battering ram. It caused a small earthquake when it landed, shattering the ground and shooting debris like a shotgun at the surroundings. The dust flew sky-high, covering the beast's entire body.

The battering ram team that didn't get away in time was decimated, the ram was flattened and the Silhouette Knights were beyond recognition.

This attack was too rash, and the behemoth that used it was hurt too. More blood flowed out from its gaping wound, with several cracks appearing on its shell. It was not obvious, but the attack that penetrated its physical boost injured some of its internal organs, the behemoth was also desperate.

But the knights' casualties were more severe. Including the squad that was attacked in the beginning, they had lost 40% of their forces, the flying boulders caused moderate damage to another 20%. And losing their ace seriously hurt the knights' morale. The attack they placed their hopes on was negated, this impacted their psyche deeply. Anxiety higher than before seized the knights.

The Culverins held by the Karrdator were shaking, the movements of the Knight Runners were unconsciously transmitted to the machines. Not only the giant beast's power, even its existence brought pressure that corroded their hearts.

“...”

Guyale watched the string of attacks from the rear of the knights, Dietrich was trembling inside the machine. Even the special attack that sacrificed part of the knights was negated in front of the beast's strength, could they really take it down? The generous amount of fighting spirit in his heart receded instantly. The damage to the behemoth was significant, but seeing its power

the absolute belief of failing shook his heart. Dietrich couldn't make a collected judgment. The thing that returned Dietrich back to normal was the angry growl from the seat in front of him.

“...Unforgivable...”

Dietrich could only see the silver hair of Ernesti sitting in the seat, but he could understand the abnormal atmosphere emitting from Eru's body.

“You dare to destroy robots before my eyes!”

“Eh?”

“The only thing permitted to destroy robots...are other robots...”

“Eh eh!?”

Eru mumbled reasons unfathomable to Dietrich as he stood Guyale up. Although he had a faint smile, his blue eyes differed from its usual shine, burning like a devil. As if it was channeling Eru's wrath, Guyale's air-intake valve screeched louder, the mana flowed through all the crystal tissues in the body, the body encased in armor was full of power.

The mana pool was over 50%, the sword in its hand was serviceable and the machine was undamaged.

The scarlet knight took a step forward, Eru who had become a vengeful spirit returned to battle. The red Silhouette Knight charged at the giant beast, the cry of despair from Eru's passenger could be heard along the way.

The Land Emperor emerged slowly from the thick dust. Despite its body being covered in wounds, it could still move, displaying its amazing endurance. Battalion-level demon beasts were truly impressive.

On closer observation, it was on its last legs. But the knights with their devastated morale lost their will to fight when they saw the behemoth was still moving. They shot their Culverins in

response, but their scattered efforts were ineffective. They couldn't even break through the weakened shell. The encirclement of the knights that was sealing the behemoth's movements also fell apart.

Commander Philip felt a strong sense of danger from the sight before him. He had issued numerous orders, but it was not easy to build up lost morale and he was growing anxious. Suddenly, a scarlet wind pierced through the loose encirclement.

The red Silhouette Knight was prominent among the earth-colored Karrdators. It made a beeline for the behemoth before anyone could react.

"This is impossible! We are doomed, it can't be done even when the knights are here, there is no escape ahhhhh!?"

Eru who is piloting Guyale didn't even look at the knights and Dietrich's nonsensical scream didn't reach their ears. Eru's deep blue eyes locked onto the behemoth.

Leaving the knights out of his mind, Eru closed in on the behemoth. Even though the behemoth was heavily wounded, it howled when the red figure in its memory appeared. It ignored the gushing blood and tattered shell and moved its limbs.

The gap between them disappeared.

The speedier Guyale had the advantage. Due to suffering many cracks and fractures from the previous fight, the behemoth's defense was full of breeches. The scarlet machine turned into a whirlwind, slashing repeatedly at the behemoth with its speed. The sword cut accurately through a fissure, causing sparks and screeching noises as the shell cracked and fell to the ground.

"Sword attacks are effective! This mean the enemy is at its limit!"

Guyale glided around and slashed, turning back and pouncing at the behemoth again, turning his evasive tactics into offense. These two had switched their previous roles.

The knights were shocked by the scene before them. In their

eyes, Guyale was a machine piloted by a Laihiala Pilot Academy student. A student younger than the knights was standing up to the giant beast without fear and attacking it. At a glance, it seemed like foolish bravery, but that was why it had a motivational effect that fired up the hearts of the knights.

“All units, assume encirclement formation! Form new ranks! Renew the attack!”

The knights felt shame from losing heart before the demon beast’s might and moved with renewed conviction. The units with restored morale formed up quickly and encircled the behemoth. Each squad took note of the scarlet machine’s position and started magic attack support, restraining the behemoth’s movements and damaging it.

The sword of the scarlet knight peeled off the shell of the beast, the Culverins pierced the behemoth’s legs. The attacks of the giant beast was sealed and it became a static target board.

The tables had been turned and the behemoth was on the verge of defeat. This bolstered the morale of the knights and Guyale moved freely. The colossal beast finally reached its limit, its shell was dropping off from the damage and its blood turned the ground into a marsh. Anyone could tell the beast had lost its ability to resist.

But an unexpected ending page was flipped.

A sudden pressure assaulted Eru and Dietrich out of nowhere. As Guyale was turning its body to evade, the strength in one leg disappears and it leaned heavily to one side. A strong force pushed the scarlet knight to the ground and Guyale’s red armor was twisted and peeled off, scattering in midair.

“What happened!?”

Eru continued to control Guyale in a panic, rolling backwards and kicking off the ground with all its might. Guyale finally steadied its posture with one knee on the ground.

“The behemoth didn’t hit us, so why are we hurt...”

Eru shifted the machine's head to scan the status of the legs, finding the joints stiff and seeing shards of crystal tissue falling out from the gaps in the armor.

Eru finally understood the situation after seeing this, this was not caused by attacks. Eru made intrinsic control possible with his full-control piloting. But his high output demand made Guyale break under the heavy burden.

This long battle had also exceeded the operation time of a normal Silhouette Knight, which added to the stress, damaging the legs which took the brunt of the burden. Living beings would be alerted through pain stimuli. But Silhouette Knights were robots without the function of reporting feedback on abnormalities. You would only know when it exceeded the limit and suffered damage.

Eru frowned deeply. Guyale held the advantage because of its excellent mobility. But it couldn't fight on with its legs busted. Eru could only abandon the machine and run for it.

There was not much time left for him to worry about this. The behemoth was rushing at the hated red machine as usual.

The Culverins fired by the knights rained down on the behemoth as they tried to save the scarlet machine that suddenly kneeled down, but that didn't stop the giant beast. The behemoth's remaining right eye was bloodshot and full of hatred, an angry howl came from its mouth. The shattered shell and flowing blood didn't even faze it, the demon beast charged with the conviction to decimate everything. Its speed was much slower, but it was a death sentence for the immobile Guyale.

'To break down at this timing... It's a pity, but I have to escape.'

With his capabilities, Eru could get out of the giant beast's range once he abandoned the machine.

'That's right, if...it is just me.'

Eru could do it, but Dietrich behind him couldn't. Eru released the harness and stared at the behemoth on the holo monitor. There was no time left, the charge would shatter Guyale. Eru's thinking

speed reached its peak.

'It is not good for my conscience to leave Senpai here... But it is not easy to survive this.'

He desperately went through all sorts of possibilities. What Ernesti could do, what Dietrich could do and what Guyale could do.

'...There is a way, but it is a gamble. There is only one chance, the chips are our lives... But to die with a robot is an acceptable way to go out with a bang.'

That was the best a robot otaku could hope for. Eru had no hesitation in choosing this insane option. To risk his life and fight the giant beast.

"Senpai, can you hear me?"

Eru's calmness doesn't match the situation before them. Would Dietrich sitting in the back listen? He was already in despair over their fate, mumbling as he panted. He was not acting normal.

"If you hear me, please switch with me and take over the controls."

Eru's tone was the same, but the strange aura in his voice made Dietrich tremble in fear.

Eru ignored him, pulling the Winchester and the silver nerves to the front, almost hitting the holo monitor. Leaving the empty seat.

"It's hopeless! What can I do by piloting..."

"It doesn't matter. Sit on the chair now if you want to live."

Dietrich reacted to the words 'if you want to live'. He was on the verge of breaking down, but he still slid into the seat.

"Shit... Shit! What are we doing! What can we do!?"

“I will only say this once, so listen carefully. First...”

Part of the silver nerve was pulled along with the Winchester, but several of them were still connected to the control stick. It could still be operated normally. Once he confirmed Dietrich was holding the control stick, Eru released his control from the magius engine's domain.

The behemoth was right in front of them. It was critically wounded with nowhere to run, but its massive body was still imposing, filling their entire field of vision. Eru took a deep breath and stared at the figure in the holo monitor and concentrated.

He pushed his unique skill ‘the processing speed that could fully control a Silhouette Knight’ to the limit and programmed a large-scale script. It was an overt spell in scale, similar to those used by Silhouette Knights but larger.

He had a bigger mana pool than others as he had trained nonstop since childhood. But that was the standard for humans, not enough to execute tactical-level spells. Even if he could process and construct the script, he couldn't use tactical-level magic. But he was sitting on a large supply of mana right now. Indeed, mana from Guyale.

Silhouette Knights couldn't construct magic alone. Eru didn't have the mana for tactical-level spells. But they could cover this other weakness and Eru was executing this never-before-seen plan.

“~~~...!~...!!!”

Dietrich screamed without realizing it. Fear made him stiff, but Dietrich believed in the young boy behind him and acted.

Eru focused on processing. Creating a large and powerful spell to the limit.

The behemoth's head was like a protruding boulder, closing in on Guyale to smash it. Their distance was close enough to make out the details on the behemoth's skin.

Everything that followed happened in an instant.

Guyale extended its arms as if to hug the behemoth and created an air bullet, but did not fire it out, constructing an air bag. Eru used the magic he conjured to decelerate when moving at high speeds, ‘Air Suspension’ and enlarged it to tactical level.

The air cushion he made collided with the impact of the demon beast’s charge. The compressed air was squeezed even tighter from the collision. A force that was still tremendous after hitting the air bag pushed at Guyale. The pressure deformed the armor and blew away crystal shards.

“Now! Jump back—!”

Eru opened his eyes and shouted. He heard a reaction from Dietrich. Dietrich didn’t think about the content of the instruction and reacted on reflex—extending his legs and pushing down hard on the pedal. Guyale’s leg was broken and couldn’t walk, but the crystal tissues that were still working executed the command faithfully and expended all its energy.

The behemoth had broken through the air cushion and was about to pierce the scarlet knight—Guyale leapt back recklessly at this moment. The crystal tissues in the legs snapped completely, but it completed its task.

“It’s not over! Hang on! Hard Skin!”

Eru’s mission was not over, he cast an armor-hardening spell on Guyale’s front armor. At this moment, the behemoth’s head came into contact with Guyale and the hit landed.

Weakening the impact with an air cushion, minimizing the force by jumping back and defending with hardening magic. Even with this, it didn’t negate the force of the blow as the armor dented and the pieces surrounding it broke and flew off. The holo monitor in front of the pilot seat shattered, making Eru gasp.

“It is not enough after doing all this...!”

All his efforts were negated, making him think about giving up. But a small blessing aided him—The training machine used by Laihiala Pilot Academy placed its priority on pilot safety, so the

torso armor was made thicker. The front armor reinforced by Eru's magic stayed true to this priority, denting heavily but still withstood the behemoth's strike, protecting its passengers completely.

Anyone would think the red machine was lost, but Guyale looked like it is hugging the head of the behemoth, still retaining its humanoid shape. The behemoth was baffled by the knight that didn't fall apart from its charge. The attack still carried on, the behemoth advanced and pushed Guyale along.

“...If we make it through.”

The time to strike back was here.

Eru grabbed the control stick and moved Guyale's body. He only moved the robot's right wrist and lifted it up and punched at the behemoth's head. No matter how weak the shell was, the body of the giant beast would not be damaged by bare hands. But the arm was not aiming for the shell, but the left eye socket.

A broken half of a sword was stuck in there. Eru grabbed the broken sword and activated all the remaining mana in Guyale's crystal tissues. He overrode all safety limiters, emptying all mana reserves, using all his processing power to construct the largest spell.

“Checkmate!”

After uttering this phrase softly, the largest scale lightning the world had ever seen channeled through Guyale's arm into the broken sword, striking the behemoth's head directly.

The behemoth was a living being and had a brain in its head. The lightning through the eye socket was conducted through the optical nerves and blood vessels, hitting the brain directly. The large current ravaged the brain of the behemoth, frying the interior. Even the giant beast couldn't take it when its brain which was the control hub of living things burned.

The Land Emperor finally took its last breath.

The electric current continued to fry the nerves, making the behemoth spasm and jerk. It flung off Guyale that was hugging the head onto the ground. Guyale had exhausted its mana pool, so it couldn't even harden its structure, breaking into pieces on impact with the ground.

—The giant beast collapsed to the ground slowly.

Death came to the powerful beast that rampaged so fiercely. The ending was brutal and sudden, everyone was silent. When they finally comprehend that the demon beast would not move again, joy spread among the knights in waves. It didn't take long for them to cheer in victory.

“...It was dangerous till the very end, any mistake and we would have turned into minced meat.”

The decimated Guyale was in a pitiful state. The limbs had fallen off, the inner skeleton was breaking apart with the connection magic gone. Every piece of armor was battered and there were only bits of red paint left. The pilot seat was also shaken up, but Eru cast Air Suspension with his own mana to absorb the impact safely. Dietrich was almost crushed to death from the pilot seat's reaction force, but that was better than becoming minced meat for real.

Although this was a plan that might have killed them along with the behemoth, Eru was relieved to have survived. He let out a long sigh and showed a gloomy expression.

“...Ahhh...in pieces... Guyale is in pieces...”

Eru ignored the unconscious Dietrich whose pupils had turned up and shook his head, worrying about the wrong priorities.

“Ahh, I can't stay depressed. Guyale, I will fix you up, please wait for me!”

Eru made a strange resolution and left the half destroyed cockpit.

Chapter 9: After the fight

The sound of timbers cracking could be heard repeatedly. The source was the mountain of mass—the carcass of the Land Emperor.

When the behemoth died, the mana supply powering the physical boost magic stopped. The massive body over 80 meters in length couldn't withstand its own weight and collapsed on itself. The armored shell that suffered countless cracks in the course of battle crumbled, the struts holding the body up crumbled one by one, the height fell slowly. The lower half of the body that supported the heavier weight was in shambles.

The Jantunen garrison knights cheered as the giant beast crumbled further, shooting their Silhouette Arms into the air with pride.

But the knights suffered serious casualties. That was why the ones who survived had to sing their victory song loudly as a tribute for those who fell in battle.

Some distance from the knights, 3 Silhouette Knights were advancing. Among the band of Karrdator knights, these 3 had a different appearance and stood out from the crowd.

One was the command Silhouette Knight 'Sordwort' piloted by the commander Philip. Compared to the Karrdators that focused on practicality, it had a prominent, regal appearance and was covered in plate armor.

Beside him was the vice commander's 'Cardiaria', a Karrdator that had been reinforced.

Behind them was the training machine from Laihiala Pilot

Academy, 'Earlecumber'. Its appearance was crude, but it was covered in pure white armor, giving it a different aesthetic compared to the Karrdators.

They walked past the behemoth that was still crumbling and approached their target. The closer they got, the clearer the pieces with red paint was.

—Scattered around here were the remains of the Silhouette Knight Guyale.

The first thing Philip who was leading the way saw was Guyale's right arm. Its skeletal structure was broken and it was bent out of shape. The trio glanced at it and continued without a word, finally reaching their main objective. The torso without its head and limbs, the armor was in shambles, the crystal tissue has been utterly destroyed. The armor protecting the chest cavity had caved in, the whole torso was misshapen. The strong frontal armor was a twisted lump, showing how strong the impact was.

'I did think it would be like this... From the looks of things, the Knight Runner inside... It's hopeless...'

No one made a sound, thinking about the same thing. They had some hope, but if the impact shattered the torso, it was impossible for the pilot to survive.

Philip and Gottfried stared silently at the holo monitor. The scarlet knight from Laihiala Pilot Academy fought the behemoth to the last moment to protect its juniors. Compared to the knights who were on the verge of collapse, it was on the very front lines. It battled the giant beast like a burning torch of courage, taking down the behemoth with its life. Philip wondered what the pilot was like? The pilot should be a student, but his future was immeasurable. The skills to take down a behemoth, the virtuous attitude to risk his life for others and the indomitable spirit to overcome the odds. He possessed the 3 characteristics a knight should have. Philip had not conversed with him before, but Philip gave a silent prayer for the hero who sacrificed himself honorably.

Earlecumber moved ahead and kneeled beside Guyale.

Earlecumber's front armor opened with the sound of

compressed air jetting out. Edgar stood on the armor, silently looking at the remains for a while before saying

“Di... I am late, but I still want to apologize...back then, I thought you abandoned us and escaped.”

Unlike his calm tone, Edgar’s expression was twisted with regret.

“I lost all respect for you at that moment... But I empathized with you too. The scenario was too dire then, I told myself ‘Di won’t work with us in this situation’. But... You came back.”

Edgar clenched fist are trembling.

“And so... Sorry Dietrich. I don’t know why you were hiding your real strength. Even so, you sacrificed yourself to save us...”

Edgar’s monologue was interrupted by an explosion. Shortly after, Guyale’s chest armor flew into the sky before him.

The chest armor flew and made an arc through the sky and rolled loudly when it landed.

The 3 robots followed the movement of the chest armor that blasted off and looked back at the remains by their feet. A short figure climbed out from the cockpit as they watched in awe.

“The front armor can’t open because it is bent out of shape. That took some effort to get out... Eh? What’s wrong everyone?”

“...Huh?”



Jantunen was under high alert because of the deployment of the entire garrison knights, but the gates were fully open to welcome the return of the knights. The victorious garrison knights returned in an orderly fashion, advancing slowly on the main street.

News of the behemoth's invasion had spread throughout the whole kingdom with the deployment of the knights. The citizens who were trembling from fear cheered with reckless abandon for those who returned safely. Their excitement matched that of winning a war, and in reality, defeating a behemoth successfully had more value than winning a war.

Something followed the advance of the parade and the crowd was silenced when it entered the gate. It was the head of the demon beast which was much larger than a Silhouette Knight. A carriage ferried the intimidating head, even the citizens that didn't see it move knew its threat. The silence spread, and suddenly exploded into cheers twice as loud.

Everyone was singing the exploits of the knights, deepening their respect for their guardian garrison knights. Jantunen's parade reached its climax at this point.

Some distance away from main street, a quiet cafe was isolated from the bustle of the city. Most of the citizens were gathered around the main street, leaving the cafe empty. There were just a few youths patronizing the shop, they were people related to this incident: Edgar, Stefania, Archid, Adeltrud and Ernesti.

“Really! You are too reckless...”

Edgar sighed and lowered the teacup in his hand. He was saying this on behalf of everyone present. He couldn't help himself from commenting after hearing Eru casually describe his actions during the Land Emperor incident.

“This makes me sympathize with the ‘victim’ who was

dragged in, Di...”

After hacking into the magius engine, Eru exerted full control over the machine and fought. Just listening to this was enough to make anyone with common sense faint after screaming. The more detailed Eru’s explanation, the more troubled Edgar got. Stefania’s eyes were wide open and her surprise was evident. Chid and Ady were stunned, but accepted it since it was Eru. The twins looked at each other and said:

“See, he hijacked a Silhouette Knight as expected.”

“You two, what do you mean by ‘expected’? Although you are right.”

Eru looked unhappy, but averted his eyes guiltily when the twins glared back.

Apart from Eru, Edgar was the only one with experience piloting Silhouette Knights. That was why he was shocked after listening to Eru, but was convinced. From what he remembered, Guyale’s performance was not that outstanding. If Eru didn’t hack in, it wouldn’t have been that powerful. But even with the facts right before him, Edgar just shook his head. He suddenly thought of something.

“Ernesti, if Di didn’t run, what did you plan to do?”

“Nothing. I just went with the flow back then, I would probably have boarded the carriage and escaped.”

Edgar’s face soured. What would have happened if Guyale didn’t join the fray? Edgar wouldn’t be sitting here in that case, and the knights’ casualties would probably have doubled. Not only that, the behemoth might not have been defeated. Without question, a medal of honor should be awarded to the petite youth in front of Edgar, but rewarding his outstanding performance was an issue because of Eru’s position. Edgar bit his lips and went into the main topic.

“We...the surviving high school pilots, will be going to Känkänen for an awards ceremony.”

Edgar felt conflicted even though he was talking about such a glorious event.

“The Jantunen garrison knights will send representatives as well, probably Sir Hallhagen and a few others. This involves a battalion-level demon beast invasion, a story that is worthy of be spread throughout the nation, no, to all nations. They say there will be a grand ceremony.”

“You are right, congratulations...but you seem unhappy about it.”

“The existence of the scarlet knight would be covered up for this incident... This means Ernesti’s achievements will not be stated.”

Stefania wore an apologetic expression and looked at the tea beside her hand. Chid and Ady understood the meaning of these words after a while and glared at Edgar. Only Eru seemed unaffected and nodded.

“I see. If I was a member of the knights or an official high schooler, there wouldn’t be any problems.”

“Hey, things would be serious if Eru wasn’t there! Why can’t he receive commendation?”

Chid stood up in protest. Stefania stopped him with a look, sighed and explained:

“Calm down. If a normal knight performs so outstandingly, they will be promoted or commended. For high schoolers, they will be enlisted as an official knight... But we can’t promote Eru this way.”

“Why? Eru is obviously stronger than those run-of-the mill knights!?”

“Being a knight means he has to join an order of knights. He can be a member with his exceptional power, but there are few who are willing to work with a 12-year-old. Working under an organization means Eru can’t be willful in his actions.”

“We can work something out if he is an adult... If they passed over the knights and granted honors to a 12-year-old, the knights will look bad. The honor of the knights is the honor of the kingdom, no one wants that to happen.”

Eru tilted his head and asked with a smile:

“I understand. Senpai are here to convince me?”

The expression of Edgar and Stefania tensed. Eru didn't say much about their expressions and continued:

“Let's forget about this incident. I am satisfied with piloting an actual Silhouette Knight. Instead of asking shamelessly for rewards, doing nothing is much more relaxing. Besides, I was the one who butted in without permission. I don't want to be manipulated by others because of this incident.”

Stefania nodded her head in agreement.

“That won't happen, I guarantee in the name of the Serrati family.”

“That's right, I will remind Sir Hallhagen.”

Eru nodded after receiving their promises. Unlike Eru, Chid and Ady were unable to accept this, asking with a moan:

“Eru, is this really okay?”

“Yeah, Eru's dream is to be a knight and pilot Silhouette Knights correct? Are you giving in now?”

“This is an exceptional case. I don't plan to demand any rewards.”

Seeing Eru consoling the unhappy twins, Edgar and Stefania breathed a sigh of relief. Guyale and the behemoth were both destroyed in the battle, a testament to the desperate situation Eru was in. Not giving any reward to Eru didn't sit well with them either. On the flip side, they understood the order of knights wouldn't be able to handle Eru's exceptional case well. They

volunteered to convince Eru of the knights' dilemma in order to avoid using official orders to pressure Eru. They didn't have to worry about Eru protesting violently, but the contents of their speech was filled with illogical things, so they were prepared for the talks to stall. They felt grateful over Eru's generous disposition.

'Phew, that was close. I charged ahead without thinking too much, there will be tons of trouble if I made the knights lose face. Giving me a way to reject commendation cordially is a big help...'

Eru who appeared to be drinking tea calmly was breaking out in cold sweat. To be honest, he was troubled over how to settle things on his end. It was hard for Eru to do anything from his position. The other party proposing a peaceful resolution made Eru relieved.

'I did have a great time piloting. I even got to see the magius engine's script, that is enough for a reward. And the knights owe me a favor too. Being too forceful will blow matters up, just let them bask in the glory. Also...it will be good if I can build a close relationship with the knights and the people present.'

Eru finished his tea happily as he thought about how to resolve the matter.

The atmosphere was peaceful after ending the tense topic. The sound of cheers was ongoing all this while. They chatted casually in the meantime.



—His conscious recovered slowly. The first thing in his mind was a question.

‘What... What happened? That time...the demon beast...’

He felt a sharp pain from all over his body, stimulating his mind and waking him up.

“Eh... Uguu...”

Dietrich groaned from the pain of his protesting body and opened his eyes. The first thing he saw was a wooden ceiling. He turned his head and observed white drapes. He was still confused, but he understood the situation before him. He was warded in a hospital-like facility—which meant he is safe.

‘...This means, the battle was won...?’

He shivered when he remembered the giant beast. From the situation at that time, it was impossible to save him without getting rid of the beast. Dietrich deduced from this that the battle ended somehow, and was a success since he was alive.

“Ara, you’re awake?”

Dietrich relaxed after deducing the crisis ended, and more importantly, he was safe. As he lay down groggily, a voice came from his side.

“This is the Jantunen pilots’ infirmary. You have lost consciousness for over a day after the battle.”

Dietrich turned his head with his eyes wide open. It was not because of the content of the speech, but the person who was saying it—

“Don’t worry, you have many bruises, but no serious injuries. You are young and will heal up in no time!”

His white clothes almost bursting from his muscular body, his hair styled in a crew cut. His feet were shoulder width apart but his knees were clamped together. He was speaking in a feminine way

despite having a deep voice—This was a man.

A scream erupted suddenly and filled the entire infirmary.



A convoy comprising of carriages and Silhouette Knights was traveling along the gravel road leading from Jantunen to the capital—the Fremmevira Highway.

Inside the carriage were students from Laihiala Pilot Academy's knighthood department. The Silhouette Knights were escorts from the Jantunen garrison knights. The knights were headed toward the capital for the award ceremony and were acting as escorts since they were heading the same way.

There was a person sitting on the top of one of the carriages. That person was basking in the sun, watching the long convoy line under the warm sun. At the end of the line was a wagon filled with recovered Silhouette parts. The machine that was wrecked by the behemoth was turned into junk, but the most valuable torso was retrieved. The damage was assessed, if the magius engine and ether reactor known as the heart was fine, it would be easier to repair. At the worst, they could place the heart into a new body.

The Jantunen garrison knights' wreckage had been sent to Jantunen, the ones here were the Laihiala Pilot Academy's robots.

The boy on top of the carriage, Ernesti, looked toward the back with a blank expression. There had to be parts from the scarlet Silhouette Knight on the wagon too, but they were covered by

canvas so Eru couldn't tell where they were. The last scene of the fight with the behemoth while piloting Guyale flashed across his mind. He felt the bump of the carriage as he reminisced.

‘The actions I took were a gamble largely dependent on luck. In order to avoid this, I need a machine that won’t fall apart even when operating at full power...and this problem should not be entrusted to others lightly.’

Right now, Eru was the only one who could make a robot break down in such a short time, so he was the only one who wanted to resolve it. He would create his own personal machine one day. He needed to plan for the arrival of that day.

“Eru, are you brooding over here?”

As he was feeling troubled over many things, someone approach him from behind and hugged him. There was only one person who would do that in Eru's mind. He turned to look at Ady behind him.

“Yeah, I am thinking about how to resolve the weaknesses in the previous battle.”

“Why—are you thinking about this again!”

Ady looked displeased as she leaned forward. Ady was taller than Eru, so Eru was squashed when Ady leaned in with her body weight. Eru protested as his body bent forward uncomfortably.

“I know, but I have to think it over when I have time, or it will be a problem in the future.”

The pressure behind him relaxed slightly, allowing Eru to breathe. Ady stopped moving and her displeasure faded, replaced by a troubled expression.

“...Eru, you really... I hope you can promise me one thing.”

“What promise?”

“Don't go by yourself, take us with you!”

“That’s a bit...”

Eru couldn’t see Ady’s face, but he could feel her sincerity from her voice. Eru didn’t turn back and looked ahead, thinking about Ady’s request. He had been setting Silhouette Knights as his goal, and working towards that meant...

“We might not be able to help, but...”

“Don’t say that...it depends on the situation.”

“Really? I can’t pilot a Silhouette Knight. How about telling us what you plan to do!”

At this point, Eru couldn’t reject her.

“I understand... I will do my best. But it is an emergency, it will have to wait.”

“Hmmp! That’s a cunning way to put it! Even though we can’t do much, but three heads are better than one!”

“Haha, that’s right, 3 of us is...3?”

Ady’s casual words made Eru think. In his heart was a famous story, and inspiration struck.

“Three is better than 1...3 arrows compared to 1 arrow. One arrow is easy to break, but it is hard to break if there are three. Right, it is fragile and easy to break because it is separated. That hurts... Wut arf you dooin?”

Ady pulled both of Eru’s cheeks as he was spacing out.

“Pay attention when talking to others, that was rude. Hmmp!”

“That hurts... You are absolutely right, that was ill-mannered of me.”

Ady looked at Eru nursing his cheeks painfully and thought of a good idea. She approached Eru from the side with a smile. Eru

had a foreboding feeling looking at Ady's smile.

“Right, I know a way! Teach me how to pilot Silhouette Knights!”

“Wah—to use this method!”

Eru groaned and smiled awkwardly at Ady, wondering how things came to this.



The roasted beef at the center of the table gave off a delicious aroma.

The cramped space around it were full of dishes. Eru's mother—Celestina Echevarria—was pouring soup into a huge bowl. Beside her was the mother of the twins Ilmatar Olter (Ilma) who arranged the freshly baked pie. The extravagant dishes made the two happy as they laid out the plates.

“Is it time for your Ady to learn how to cook?”

“Hoho, it's about time. That child is always messing around with Chid.”

They finished the preparations nimbly as they chatted and called their families to have dinner. The two families gathered shortly after and ate happily.

This was the Echevarria residence. The Echevarrias and the

Olters were together for a party to celebrate the safe return of their children. The parents planned to welcome them back after the field trip all along. But the children were involved in an unprecedented demon beast invasion instead.

The faces of every parent turned green when they received the news, including these two families. Ilma's only family were the twins, her anxiety was indescribable. She couldn't stay alone in that state, so the Echevarrias took her in for the time being. Now, both the children and their parents had deepened their friendship.

Fortunately, the crisis was over and the children returned safely, all the families were busy and relieved.

"To be frank, it's great that everyone is safe."

Ilma watched the kids finish off the dishes and sighed. Tears welled up in her eyes and fell as she relaxed. Ilma quickly covered her face.

"We made you worry. As you can see, we are not hurt... This is a miracle."

"That's great, the most important thing is that you are safe. Your appetite is good, as if nothing ever happened."

"Nomnomnom!"

"NornNornNorn!"

"Swallow your food before talking..."

Chid and Ady continued to stuff their faces despite their mother's instruction. They were eating tasteless preserved food while traveling, so they were focusing on the delicacies before them.

"We heard that it was really dangerous, but you all seem fine. What did Eru do?"

"Yes. The behemoth and I beat each other up."

“Cough! Cough, cough.”

Mathias choked on his food when he heard the conversation between the mother and child.

“Ara, wasn’t the demon beast really big? Are you okay? Did you give it a good beating?”

“I borrowed a Silhouette Knight from a senpai so I’m okay. It was rather dangerous, but I beat it up really well and won.”

“Ara ara, you can borrow Silhouette Knights? That’s wonderful Eru. But don’t be too reckless. It’s not something you can borrow any time you want right?”

“That’s right. Luckily we have that ‘good senpai’ who aided me.”

Mathias forced himself to look away from the two of them, the others casually ignored their conversation. In some ways, this family was really disciplined.

Only Eru’s grandfather refrained from speaking during dinner, watching everything. After finishing, he called out to Eru.

“Eru, I want you to accompany me to someplace, alright?”

“Okay Grandpa. Where are we going?”

“Erm, we are going to...”



Fremmevira Kingdom capital, Känkänen.

Located at the foot of the Mount Aubigne, it served as a front line fortress in the past. The highway on either side was made with robust stones, a legacy from its days as a fortress. Several layers of walls were erected with the capital at its heart. Only the outermost siege wall had defensive functions, the rest were used for zonal segregation. Its existence was a testament of the history of this city and nation.

In the center of the capital lay 'Castle Shreiber'.

The castle had traces of its days as a fortress, ancient and majestic. Even now, the tough appearance of the fortress commanded respect. Its reputation as the 'Kingdom of Knights' was presented harmoniously, allowing all visitors to feel the pride of the city.

In the heart of Castle Shreiber was an audience hall for the king to receive his guests.

It was a vast space with a high ceiling, enough for Silhouette Knights to enter comfortably. Elegant drapes were hung on all the walls in fixed intervals between the pillars. A red carpet was rolled out in the center, and at its end was the throne of the king. An amazingly big seat was situated behind the throne, with a Silhouette Knight sitting on it.

That was the personal Silhouette Knight of the King—known as the King's Knight 'Raids of Valor'. Its appearance was more elegant than any machine within Fremmevira. A cape with the same pattern of the national flag covered its shoulders, displaying the majesty of a knight standing at the very peak. Cardiaras piloted by the royal guards were positioned to the side of the hall with Raids of Valor right at the center, a powerful and intimidating scene.

Sometimes, the hall would be cramped with soldiers and Silhouette Knights, but there were only a few people here today.

A middle-aged man was sitting on the throne before Raids of

Valor, the 10th king of Fremmevira Kingdom, Ambrosius Tahvo Fremmevira. In front of him were Marquis Joachim Serrati and Jantunen garrison knight Commander Philip Hallhagen. According to custom, they had to address the king while kneeling on one knee with their heads down. After the king granted him permission, Philip raised his head to report.

“That concludes the report of the battle with the behemoth.”

King Ambrosius acknowledged with a grunt and nodded after listening to the detailed report from Philip. He was holding a concise report in his hand and was browsing it as he listened.

“And the carcass of the behemoth?”

“Your Majesty, it’s impossible for the garbage collectors to harvest a colossal beast like a behemoth, I have dispatched the Silhouette Knights to assist. It should be completed in the next few days.”

“I want to use its carcass to offset our losses. But our casualties are light, considering the opponent is a battalion-level demon beast.”

“Your Majesty, Jantunen’s forces are depleted, please allow me to send some reinforcement to support them.”

Ambrosius focused on one point of the report as he listened to Joachim, they were the logs of the scarlet knight and its pilot Ernesti. A baffled expression appeared on the king’s face.

“Echevarria... Lauri’s grandson? What an exceptional performance. Isn’t that right, Philip? It is unbelievable, did this child really topple the demon beast before everyone?”

“Yes Your Majesty, I saw it with my own eyes. I understand the content seems dubious to Your Majesty...”

Philip couldn’t give a definite answer to the king with regards to this and his voice grew gradually softer. In fact, Joachim was doubtful as he listened to the conversation between them.

“I don’t think you would spin such a ridiculous tale, but this makes me worried... Especially this part, rewriting the script in the magic engine. If that’s true, that is really marvelous.”

“Half of them are rumors, but I saw it myself...and I’m convinced it really happened.”

“I heard the same report... Only Sir Hallhagen and the knights know the truth.”

Ambrosius closed his eyes. The ability to fight a behemoth was amazing, but that was only the might of one man. But it was different if he could reprogram the magic engine, which was a skill that had no precedent.

After thinking it over, he mumbled:

“...This child is too dangerous.”

Philip panicked when he heard this. Eru literally saved the lives of dozens of pilots with his participation. They couldn’t commend Eru because of the state of things, but Eru accepted it unconditionally, so Philip owed him a favor. He might be a youth that was much younger than him, but having fought as comrades, Philip wouldn’t forget how Eru saved his knights.

“You Majesty, allow me to report. This boy might be just 12, but he is knowledgeable and courageous. His etiquette is fine and his peers like him. More importantly, he was always on the front line during the battle with the behemoth...”

Ambrosius stopped Philip’s words with a wave.

“Don’t worry, I am not planning to do anything to him. It might be fine now, but you say he is just 12 years of age. Having amazing power at such a tender age... Since he is just a 12-year-old boy, he might grow wild with his exceptional strength. That’s my worry.”

Ambrosius was right to be worried. No matter how talented or pure in character, people could change with the passage of time. Especially a 12-year-old who was moving into a rebellious and

emotional age. If he grew arrogant because of his talent, it would harm him in the end.

But inside Ernesti was a soul with 40 years of experience, so normal conventions didn't apply to him. But that was beyond their imaginations, so they were worried that Eru would stray from the right path in the future.

“If that's the case, what should we do?”

“Since he doesn't chase mindlessly after glory, he might become a great knight... We need to guide him. It might be unnecessary since Lauri is there. Hmm, alright... Arrange for Ernesti to meet me.”

After Ambrosius issued his orders, Joachim and Philip bowed and acknowledged the order.

Translator/Editor's Notes

1. ↩ Basically a nerd/fanatic.
2. ↩ Kanji – Fundamental
3. ↩ 牛若丸
4. ↩ Kanji: Explode Fire Ball
5. ↩ Kanji: Lightning Javelin
6. ↩ The words here were ‘pretty vast’ and it made no sense to me at all. I made it ‘competition’ instead to make it related here. I judged this to be better and it made more sense that way.
7. ↩ Junior/underclassman and senior/upperclassman = kouhai and senpai
8. ↩ Pretty sure he’s talking about Obi Wan.
9. ↩ Demon Beast Highway
10. ↩ A battalion is about 300.
11. ↩ A squad is made up of 9.
12. ↩ Equal to 1 Silhouette Knight in power.
13. ↩ Kanji: Needle Head Ape
14. ↩ Kanji: Wind Blade
15. ↩ Kanji: Spear of Flame

Credits

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